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S E R M O N S

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O N

PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

By ROBERT WALKER,

One of the Ministers of the High Church of Edinburgh.

PHILIP. liii. 1. *To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.*

HEB. xiii. 8. *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.*

1 PETER iii. 15. *Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.*

VOLUME II.

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THE MOST HONOURABLE
PRACTICAL SUBJECTS

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WAGER



THE FOLLOWING SERMONS

ARE INSCRIBED

MOST RESPECTFULLY

BY

THE AUTHOR

T O

THE MOST HONOURABLE,
THE MARCHIONESS-DOWAGER
OF LOTHIAN,

THE FOLLOWING SERMONS

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MOST RESPECTFULLY,

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THE AUTHOR.

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S E R M O N I.

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ties,

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EZEKIEL, ix. 4.

And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry, for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

THE Apostle Paul having recited to the Christians at Corinth, some of those awful judgements which God had inflicted upon his ancient church for their rebellion and obstinacy, subjoins these memorable words, 1 Cor. x. 11. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, (or types, as the word is rendered in the margin); and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." The Bible, though it records the actions of men, yet properly speaking, is the history of God, and contains

tains an account of his proceedings with his creatures in a great variety of instances; that from those acts of government, compared with what he positively declares concerning himself, we may be enabled to form the clearest and justest conceptions of his nature and will; and may learn, with undoubted certainty, what we have either to fear or to hope from him.

God is always the same; "with him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning:" and therefore in his past procedure, we see the plan of his present and future administration; which brings the passage I have been reading home to ourselves, and interests us deeply in the matter it contains.

In the preceding chapter, the Prophet had got a full view of the abominations that were done in the midst of Jerusalem; and here he gets a visionary representation of their punishment. He beholds five men approaching the city, each of them armed with a destroying weapon, who are expressly commanded to slay the inhabitants, both old and young, beginning at the sanctuary. But before they proceed to execution, one distinguished by his garb, being clothed

death lign, and having a writer's inkhorn by his side, receives the gracious commission recorded in my text, to separate the precious from the vile, by setting a mark upon their foreheads, that they might not be involved in the ruin of their fellow-citizens.

Whether any sentence of wrath hath already gone forth against these sinful lands to which we belong, must be to us an impenetrable secret. "The heart of a king is unsearchable," said Solomon; much more is the heart of the King of kings. But surely it can never be unseasonable to lead your attention to a passage of scripture, where God's mercy to the penitent, and his peculiar concern for their safety, are set before us in so just and striking a light.

Godly sorrow for abounding iniquity is at all times a dutiful and becoming exercise; nevertheless there are certain seasons when the call to it may be considered as more loud and pressing. Some of these I shall mention in the first place.

Secondly, I shall inquire, with as much tenderness as regard to truth will permit, how the case stands with respect to the time

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time and place in which our Lord is cast, and if it shall appear, that all-boding symptoms of approaching danger are to be found among us in a very high degree, I shall endeavour, in the

Third place, to lay before you a few of the genuine symptoms and proper effects of the gracious temper I mean to recommend;—and then conclude the subject with some practical improvement.

First. If it shall be asked, When, or upon what occasions, the exercise of godly sorrow for sin is in a peculiar manner feasible? I answer,

When transgressors are very numerous; when the body of a people is corrupted, so that, in the language of the Prophet Isaiah, “the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint,” then all who fear God are loudly called upon to fight and to cry for the abominations that are done in the midst of the land. If one Achan troubled the whole camp of Israel, what must a multitude of sinners do? If the disciples of our Lord were exceeding sorrowful when their master told them that there was one traitor in their company, how afflicting must it

flow

be

S E R M O N I E 9

best to a true lover of God, to behold the wicked so multiplied, that in comparison of them, the godly are only a small remnant; a very "little flock," that can scarcely be discerned?

Their call becomes still more pressing, when transgressors are not only numerous, but likewise bold and impudent; sinning, as Absalom did, "before all Israel, and in the sight of the sun." This is a fatal presage of approaching vengeance; for God will not always tolerate such insolent contempt of his authority. Judgement may be suspended, while vice skulks in darkness, as ashamed of the light; but when it appears in broad day, when sinners proclaim their sins as Sodom, and hide them not, then they may be said "to strengthen themselves against the Almighty, and to run upon the thick bosses of his bucklers;" and it is not to be supposed that such insolent defiance can long escape without some open and awful re- buke. At such a time, then, mourning must be peculiarly seasonable.

Especially when sinners are not only numerous and impudent, but likewise guilty of those grosser abominations which in former ages have been followed with the

most

most tremendous judgements. It is true, indeed, that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against *all* unrighteousness and ungodliness of men;" nevertheless there are *some* particular instances of ungodliness and unrighteousness, which God hath marked out, and distinguished from others; as the objects of his greatest abhorrence; and with respect to which he hath said more explicitly, both in his word, and by his providence, that he will not suffer them to pass unpunished. I cannot pretend to give you a minute detail of these. Only, if you read the scriptures, you will find, that profane swearing, perjury, contempt of the sabbath, theft, murder, and adultery, are all of this kind. The prophet Zechariah beheld a flying roll of curses, twenty cubits in length, and ten in breadth, which had a commission to enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by the name of God, there to remain till it had utterly consumed it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof. "By swearing, and lying, and killing," saith the prophet Hosea, "by stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood."

S E R M O N I 7

"blood: Therefore shall the land mourn,
 "and every one that dwelleth therein shall
 "languish, with the beasts of the field,
 "and with the fowls of heaven: yea, the
 "fishes of the sea also shall be taken a-
 "way." And how highly God resents
 the profanation of his sabbath, appears
 from the reproof and exhortation of good
 Nehemiah, which is recorded Neh. xiii.
 17-18. "Then I contended with the
 "nobles of Judah, and said unto them,
 "What evil thing is this that ye do, and
 "profane the sabbath-day? Did not
 "your fathers thus, and did not God
 "bring all this evil upon us, and upon
 "this city? yet ye bring more wrath up-
 "on Israel by profaning the sabbath."
 When therefore the same sins are frequent
 and open among any people, that must
 surely be a season for grief and lamenta-
 tion. And still more,
 When the persons that commit them
 are resolute and incorrigible. "He that
 "being often reprov'd, hardeneth his
 "neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and
 "that without remedy." — "Because I
 "have purged thee," saith God by the
 prophet Ezekiel, "and thou wast not pur-
 "ged,

"ged, thou shalt not be purged from thy
 "filthiness any more, till I have basted
 "my fury to rest upon thee. I the Lord
 "have spoken it, it shall come to pass,
 "and I will do it; I will not go back,
 "neither will I spare, neither will I re-
 "pent: according to thy ways, and ac-
 "cording to thy doings, shall they judge
 "thee, saith the Lord God." When the
 wicked are forewarned of their sin and
 danger; when, by the preaching of the
 word, their duty is plainly and faithfully
 set before them; when they are exhorted
 by others, and rebuked by their own
 consciences; when they are smitten with
 such rods as bear the most legible signa-
 ture of their crimes; or when, in a mild-
 er way, they are admonished and warned
 by the punishments inflicted upon others
 for the same crimes; when, after *all* or *any*
 of these means employed to reclaim them,
 they still hold fast their iniquities, and
 will not let them go: then should the god-
 ly lament and mourn, and pray with re-
 doubled earnestness for those miserable
 creatures, who have neither the ingenuity
 nor the wisdom to pray for themselves.
 How far these causes of grief and la-
 mentation

mentation are to be found among us, I might leave to the determination of those whose "hearts are wise to discern both time and judgement;" but I should reckon myself unfaithful to God, and injurious to the souls of men, if I did not hint a few obvious remarks relative to the time and place in which our lot is cast; which was the

Second thing proposed in the method.

I shall not compare our condition to that of Sodom, when ten righteous persons were not to be found in it; neither shall I compare it to the state of the Jews, when God said by the Prophet Jeremiah, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that ex-
"cureth judgement, and seeketh the
"truth; and I will pardon it." Blessed be God, this is not precisely the case with us. There are not only some, but, I trust, a goodly number throughout the land, who sincerely love God, and seek his glory: but this I dare venture to affirm, that they are few, very few, when

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compared with the wicked; and, which is still more afflicting, their numbers are daily decreasing, while the opposite interest prevails, and visibly gains ground among all ranks and conditions of men. It is too apparent to be denied, that the vices I mentioned under the former head, intemperance, lewdness, the most insolent abuse of the Christian sabbath, lying, cursing, and even perjury itself, are more or less practised in every corner of the land. These, and many other enormities, are so frequent and undisguised, that no man who comes abroad into the world, can pretend to be ignorant that such *abominations are done in the midst of us*. I am far from supposing, that any of them were altogether unknown in former times; tho' I am verily persuaded, that all of them are now become more universal, and that some of them are carried to a much greater height, than ever they were in the days of our fathers. However, as they cannot be strictly accounted the *peculiar* reproach of the present age, I shall remind you of some other instances of departure from God, which, with greater and more evident propriety, may be termed the *distinguishing*

distinguishing characteristics of the times in which we live. I begin with *Infidelity*, which of late hath spread itself through all orders of men, the lowest not excepted. This article of charge needs no proof: for besides the multitude of professed infidels, who grasp at the character as a title of honour, and even struggle beyond the bounds of moderation to obtain it; besides these, I say, the growing disregard of the ordinances of religion, the total neglect and disuse of them by some, and the hypocritical abuse, and formal ineffectual attendance upon them by others, are fatal proofs of the prevalence of infidelity; and plainly shew, that the generality even of those who retain the Christian name, do either in their heart reject the gospel as false, or, which comes to the same purpose, reckon it a matter of small importance whether the gospel be true or not.

Again, is there not a visible *contempt of the authority of God*? If his laws contradict the humours of men, they refuse to be controlled by them, and say by their practice, *Who is the Lord, that we should obey him?* — “As for the word which

"thou hast spoken to us in the name of
 "the Lord, we will not hearken unto
 "thee, but we will certainly do whatso-
 "ever goeth forth out of our own mouth."

This is so notorious, that by many it is
 reputed a maxim of prudence, to give way
 to the prevailing humour of the times.
 Some sins, say they, have got such coun-
 tenance, that it is dangerous to reprove
 them: they must be winked at; for were
 they to be roughly handled, they would
 either grow more headstrong and violent,
 or only be exchanged for other excesses,
 which might be fully as bad, or perhaps
 worse than themselves. And though it
 betrays a disloyal, or at least a cowardly
 spirit, to be swayed by such crooked ma-
 xims, yet the currency they have got af-
 fords a pregnant proof, that *contempt of*
divine authority is another unhappy cha-
 racteristic which distinguisheth the present
 from former times.

Further, we seem, in great measure,
 to have lost any proper sense of our *de-*
pendence upon God. "When his hand is
 "lifted up, we do not see." We forget
 him in prosperity, and in adversity we
 look no higher than the creature. We
 trust

trust for deliverance to the arms of flesh,
 but never think of turning to the Lord
 who smiteth us. Nay, have there not
 been repeated attempts to prove, that a
 nation may prosper, not only independ-
 ent of God, but even, as it were, in de-
 fiance of him? that the public interest is
 promoted by the vices of individuals?
 that utility is the measure of virtue, the
 only standard for determining what is
 right or wrong? I do not mention those
 schemes from any apprehension that the
 arguments by which they are supported
 are formidable in themselves: but whe-
 ther men believe the principles or not, it
 is a certain truth, that the general prac-
 tice doth unhappily correspond with them.
 One thing is obvious, that few consider a
 reformation of manners as any means of na-
 tional prosperity; whereas had we a just
 impression of our dependence upon God,
 that would readily occur to us, not only
 as one, but as the best, nay the only ef-
 fectual means, for securing the safety,
 and advancing the real honour and inter-
 est of our country.

To all these I must add the *Luxury* and
Selfishness which have been growing upon

us for several years past, and have now spread their roots and branches so wide, that they may truly be said to fill the whole land. Pleasure is at length become a laborious study, and with many, I am afraid, it is their only study; for it leaves them no room to pursue any other. What new scenes of amusement are daily invented? How artfully are they ranged, so as to stand clear of each other, without leaving any vacant space between them? It is trifling to plead, that they are not criminal in their own nature, and may therefore be consistent with the service of God: I must call this a mean, disingenuous evasion, till they who plead it shall be pleased to inform us, what portions of time are left unoccupied, wherein they can find leisure to serve God if they would. The truth is, the present system of pleasure and fashionable politeness, appears absolutely incompatible with piety and devotion, an artful contrivance to banish reflection altogether, and to put it out of the power of sinful dying creatures to think of God, and an eternal world. This unhappy distemper of the times in which we live, doth at present carry in its face some
of

of the most alarming symptoms of danger. Instead of yielding to the most probable means of cure, it rather becomes more stubborn and infectious. Might it not have been expected, that the distress which hath prevailed in our nation for some months past, would at least have checked the growth of luxury? yet it seems to have produced the very opposite effect *. While the poor are starving, while many who are willing to labour can find no employment, and not a few have abandoned their native country to seek that sustenance in foreign parts which they could not earn at home, still is pleasure pursued with increasing ardour, and no price is deemed extravagant that can purchase an addition to it. In short, men appear to be striving against God with their eyes open, and to have studied the design of his providence on purpose to defeat it; for such an exact plan of contradiction discovers art and contrivance, and could hardly have been stumbled upon by mere accident.

* Preached in January 1773, when, in the city of Edinburgh, distress and dissipation were both in the extreme.

Judge

Judge then, upon the whole, whether there be not cause more than sufficient, *to sigh and to cry for the abominations that are done in the midst of our land.*—It still remains, in the

Third place, That I lay before you a few of the genuine symptoms, and proper effects, of the gracious temper I mean to recommend.—And,

1st, We can never be assured, that our grief for the sins of others is pure, and of the right kind, unless our hearts be duly affected with grief and sorrow for our own transgressions. It is this that distinguisheth the true mourners in Zion from censorious and ill-natured hypocrites, who are quick in discerning the smallest mote in their brother's eye, while they pay no attention at all to the great beam in their own. Godly sorrow is just and impartial; it always begins at home, and makes few visits abroad, till domestic sins are first bewailed. Many, like the lapwing, are continually fluttering about, and, with artful screams, lament the vices of all around them, merely to draw off their attention from their own cage of unclean birds.

birds. Such pretended mourners are hateful to God; and every counterfeit tear becomes a drop of oil, which shall only serve to enflame the everlasting burnings: whereas the true mourner is more severe against himself than against any other person in the world, the vilest not excepted; yea, he never sees nor hears of the wickedness of others, but conscience immediately stirs within him, and he is ready to say with Pharaoh's butler, "I remember my own fault this day." He considers the worst of men as exhibiting a true picture of his own natural condition, and humbly acknowledgeth, that it was God only who made him to differ, and that he hath nothing but what he received from his bountiful hand.

2^{dly}, Our grief is of the right kind, when it leads us to pray for transgressors: and when it hath not this effect, we have not only cause to suspect, but may conclude, without hesitation, that it is spurious and counterfeit. If, instead of the closet, it carry us abroad into company, to divulge our neighbours faults, under the pretext of bewailing them; in that case we may assure ourselves, that our hearts

are strangers to that godly sorrow whereof my text speaks. The true mourner desires, above all things, the reformation of his brother; and therefore he goes directly to God himself, who hath the hearts of all men in his hand, and can turn them as the rivers of water. He lays the sinner's case before the compassionate Saviour, not by way of complaint, but to move his pity, and to obtain his help. He uncovers the poor leper in the sight of the physician who can heal him; and at the same time would be extremely well pleased, that his loathsomeness were hid from every other eye. True grief will restrain us from speaking evil of our neighbour, or detecting his secret faults, except in cases of absolute necessity, when the concealing them would either be hurtful to the innocent, or prejudicial to the public interest. Nay, it will be painful to us to hear of the miscarriages of our brethren; and we shall be very slow to believe any reports to their disadvantage, without the strongest and most convincing evidence; and after all, we shall neither despise nor hate them, far less expose them to the contempt and hatred of others; on the contrary, we shall

shall pity them, and pray for them in secret, commending their case to the God of love, before whom all their sins are already naked and open, and earnestly implore his pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace in their behalf, with the same fervour and importunity that we ask these inestimable blessings for ourselves.

3dly, Our grief for the sins of others, if pure and genuine, will be accompanied with proper endeavours to reclaim them. Every true mourner will consider himself as "his brother's keeper," and will leave no means unattempted to prevent his ruin. He will not think it enough to plead with God for mercy to the sinner; he will likewise plead with the sinner to have mercy upon himself. He will set his guilt and danger before him in the most prudent and affecting manner he can; and though he meet with many repulses, nay, though his labour of love should be requited with scorn and hatred, yet he will repeat his application again and again, and take hold of every favourable opportunity that presents itself; remembering, that "he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death,

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“and hide a multitude of sins,” and may look for more distinguished honour in that day, “when they that be wise, shall shine “as the brightness of the firmament; and “they that turn many unto righteousness, “as the stars for ever and ever.” Once more,

4thly, If we are in truth possessed of this gracious temper, if our grief for abounding iniquity flows from the pure fountain of love to God, and zeal for his glory, we shall own his cause in the most perilous times, and reckon nothing too dear to be hazarded in his service. That saying of our Lord will be continually sounding in our ears, “He that is ashamed of “me, and of my words, in this adulterous and perverse generation, of him “also shall the Son of man be ashamed, “when he cometh in the glory of his Father with all the holy angels.” Many can weep in secret for the sins of others, who have not the fortitude to appear against them in public. But such persons would do well to consider, that neither their tears nor their prayers can avail them any thing, so long as they fold their hands like the sluggard, and neglect the proper means

means for obtaining what they ask. God permits, may commandeth us, to cast our *care* upon him; but he giveth us no allowance to dispose of our *work* in that way.—We must be doing in a humble dependence upon his grace; and then we may both ask, and hope to obtain, his blessing upon our endeavours. But if we pray, and sit still; if we lie howling upon our beds, when we should be abroad at our labour; we offend God instead of pleasing him; and can look for no other answer but this, “Who hath required these things at your hand?”—This, my brethren, is very necessary to be attended to. There is hardly any man who maintains the profession of religion, who will not readily acknowledge, that we stand in great need of a reformation; yet where is the man to be found who seems heartily disposed to contribute his assistance?—When God is calling, “Who will stand up for me against the evil doers, who will rise up for me against the workers of iniquity?” instead of replying, with the Prophet Isaiah, “Lord, here am I, send me,” we are rather inclined to say, each one for himself, Lord, such another person

person is fitter for the work, send him; but I pray thee have me excused.—I shall be accounted a zealot, saith one, if I engage in this service: I shall offend my friends, saith another: A third pleads the doubtfulness of the event: A fourth hath some worldly gain or preferment in view, and therefore it is too early to appear for God as yet; but he resolves, that after he hath got his aim in the service of the devil, then he will turn about, declare himself to be on the Lord's side, and confess him openly, when it can no longer hurt his secular interest. These maxims, however oddly they may sound, are in reality the hinges upon which the bulk of nominal Christians turn: by these despicable rules do they square their conduct, in a matter which, of all others, is the most weighty and interesting.—Whereas the true mourner prefers the glory of God, and the interest of his kingdom, to every thing else. He is not governed by the low and flexible maxims of worldly policy, he doth not consult with flesh and blood, but makes the will of God, and the dictates of conscience, the rule, and the only rule, of his conduct. He doth whatsoever ap-
pears

appears right to him in the mean time, and leaves the issue with God. He is neither discouraged by the small number of the godly, nor intimidated by the multitude of transgressors; but in all cases, where he hath a call, and opportunity to act, publicly avows the master whom he serves; and under the banner of his Almighty Saviour, he valiantly contends with earth and hell, being assured of a triumphant victory at last. If this render him vile in the eyes of others, like David, he is willing to become yet more vile; and with Moses, the man of God, he bravely prefers the reproach of Christ to all the fading riches, and honours, and pleasures, of a present world.

A great variety of uses might be made of this subject; but I shall conclude with addressing a few words to three different classes of hearers, which may be supposed to comprehend the whole of this assembly.

I shall begin with those who think that there is no great cause to complain of the world at present; and consequently, that the duty I have been recommending is
neither

neither so necessary, nor so seasonable, as many others that might have been chosen. If you are very young, I partly excuse you; but if you are advanced in life, I am unable to devise any colour of apology for you, but must necessarily charge you, either with amazing inattention, or more amazing perverseness; for it is notorious, that not the power only, but even the form of godliness, is under a lamentable decay, and hath been so for many years past: witness the general neglect of family-worship, the gross profanation of the Christian sabbath, and sundry kinds of immorality, which were scarcely known in our country half a century ago. These ill-boding symptoms make it too evident, that we are a degenerate and backsliding people, who are fast filling up the measure of our iniquity; and it is an additional cause of grief, that so few among us observe and are affected with it. I shall next speak to those who make a mock of sin, who are obstinate and hard-hearted, and instead of lamenting, glory in their wickedness.—You perhaps suspect that I am going to address you with sharpness and severity; but you are real-

ly mistaken. God knows that I pity you, and have no other aim but to make you pity yourselves.—You have long been deaf to warnings and reproofs:—O let the sweet voice of mercy at length prevail. God hath sworn, that he taketh no pleasure in your death; and this is his call to you after all your provocations, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?* Nay he hath paved the way for your return to him with the blood of his own Son, “who suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring the chief of sinners to God.”—It is impossible you can prevail against him, or disappoint him of his glory: the weapons of your rebellion can only hurt yourselves; and ere long, the proudest of his enemies shall bow down before him, and lick the very dust.—Even you, my friends, must either bend to the sceptre of his grace, or be dashed in pieces with his rod of iron: those haughty looks shall shortly be humbled, either in mercy or in judgement; and if once his wrath begin to burn, there is no power that shall be able to deliver you out of his hand. Why then will you reject his gracious counsel? Why will you

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perish when mercy is in your offer? Why will you break the hearts of all that fear God, when, by your conversion, and flight into the true city of refuge, you might afford cause of great joy both in heaven and on earth? — For the Lord's sake, consider your ways, and be wise; “seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.” The great enemy of your souls will probably suggest to you, that if you comply with this exhortation, your old companions will mock and ridicule you, in proportion to your former excess in sin; and this snare, I am afraid, is too fatally successful with many. But let not any suggestion of this kind deter you from doing what you plainly see to be your duty and your interest. The godly, with whom you join yourselves, will be far from upbraiding you with past offences; they will freely forgive all the injuries you have done to them, and teach you to magnify the riches of divine grace, which took hold of themselves when ready to perish, and advanced them to be heirs of everlasting salvation. “Wherefore come out from among the wicked, and be ye separate, saith the
“ the

"the Lord, and touch not the unclean
thing; and I will receive you, and I
will be a father unto you, and ye shall
be my sons and daughters," saith the
"Lord Almighty."

I now turn with pleasure to the mourn-
ers in Zion, who are deeply affected with
their own sins, and with the sins of those
among whom they live. And I would say
for your encouragement, that this becoming
temper affords undoubted evidence of a
work of grace upon your own hearts.
Hereby it appears that you are the chil-
dren of God, seeing the honour of your
heavenly Father is so precious in your e-
stee. And know for your comfort, that
none of these filial tears can be lost: God
puts them into his bottle, as the Psalmist
expresseth it; and whatever be the fate of
those on whose account they were shed,
you shall at last receive joy for mourning,
and garments of everlasting praise for your
present spirit of heaviness. This holy
grief, as you learn from the context, may
be a means of securing you against tem-
poral judgements; at any rate, it will
sweeten them, and shall undoubtedly be
succeeded
the "

succeeded with fulness of joy at God's right hand.

But you will remember, that grief for abounding iniquity, if pure and genuine, is always accompanied with vigorous endeavours to reclaim transgressors. This, then, my brethren, is what God demands and expects from you. Let every one in his station contribute his aid for the suppression of vice, and for promoting the interests of pure and undefiled religion. Let us join hand in hand in this necessary work and labour of love. Fired with zeal for the glory of God, and fervent charity to the souls of men, let us not only *sigh and cry for the abominations that are done in the midst of our land*, but do all that we can to prevent the ruin of a sinful nation.

Hereby we shall become public blessings while we live, and shall at last, through the mercy of God in Christ, have an entrance ministered unto us into that better world, where all tears shall be wiped away from our eyes, where the inhabitants are altogether unstained, and the joys absolutely perfect; where, with one heart,
and

and one voice, we shall celebrate the praises of Zion's King;—ascribing glory and honour, dominion and power, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Then, my brethren, is what God demands and expects from you. Let every one in his station contribute his aid for the suppression of vice, and for promoting the interests of pure and undisturbed religion. Let us join hand in hand in this necessary work and labour of love. Fired with zeal for the glory of God, and fervent charity to the souls of men, let us not only fight for the abolition of those evils that are done in the midst of our land, but do all that we can to prevent the ruin of a sinful nation.

Hereby we shall become public blessings while we live, and shall at last, through the mercy of God in Christ, have an entrance ministered unto us into that better world, where all tears shall be wiped away from our eyes, where the inhabitants are altogether unstained, and the joys absolutely perfect; where, with one heart, and

upon the commission of any gross and heinous transgression. This made Judas to cry out after his treachery, "I have betrayed innocent blood." Nay, to powerfully was his heart smitten with a sense of that

ECCLESIASTES, viii. 11.

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

THough God had not favoured us with an explicit revelation of his will, yet that absolute perfection which reason must attribute to the supreme being, would naturally lead us to conclude, that he cannot look upon sin without the greatest abhorrence; and in consequence thereof, that his impartial justice, and almighty power, will not always suffer that abominable thing which he hates, to pass unpunished. Accordingly we find, that the conscience of man, till a long habit of sinning hath rendered it callous and insensible, gives a reluctant assent to the equity of such punishment, by that anguish which it raiseth in the sinner's mind

live

upon

upon the commission of any gross and heinous transgression. This made Judas to cry out after his vile treachery, "I have betrayed innocent blood." Nay, so powerfully was his heart smitten with a sense of the demerit of his crime, that, despairing of pardon, he in a manner anticipated the sentence of condemnation, and became the executioner of divine justice, by laying violent hands upon himself. And the Apostle Paul testifies concerning the Gentile world, that even they, by the light of nature, and the dictates of unassisted reason, "knew the judgement of God;" and universally acknowledged, with respect to many acts of atrocious wickedness, "that they who committed such things were worthy of death."

But the sacred records have put this matter beyond all uncertainty. There "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men;" and a curse is denounced against every one, without exception, "who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do, them." So that a sentence is past, and stands in force, against every

evil

evil work : and the words of Solomon which I have chosen for the subject of the following discourse, represent to us,—*on the one hand*, the marvellous patience of God in suspending the execution of this righteous sentence ;—and, *on the other hand*, mens vile abuse of this unmerited goodness. Instead of being led to repentance, they grow bolder in sin ; and “ *because* sentence against their evil works is not speedily executed, *therefore* their heart is fully set in them to do evil.”

There is an awful emphasis in the last of these expressions : it denotes the extreme wickedness that sinners may arrive at ; not only to commit sin when assaulted with violent temptations, but to make an habitual trade of it ; nay, to employ themselves in it with delight. *Their heart is so fully set in them to do evil*, that all their faculties bend that way. Thus we read of some, “ *who drink iniquity like water*,”—“ *who devise mischief upon their beds*, and set themselves in a way that is not good :” nay, who put themselves to incredible pains, and hard labour, as it were, that they may exceed in wickedness : “ *They* and *thereupon* picture to *best* their *will*.”

"weary themselves to commit iniquity,"
and "sin as with a cart-rope."

It must no doubt appear an incredible abuse of the divine goodness, to pervert that patience which should lead men to repentance, into an encouragement to sin more presumptuously; yet so it hath been in times past; and there is too just cause to complain, that it continues to be so still. Indeed, "when God's judgements are in the earth," the inhabitants thereof do sometimes "learn righteousness;" at least so long, as the rod lies heavy upon them; they may refrain from those sins which they imagine have subjected them to it; but no sooner is the rod laid aside, than they quickly relapse into their former course of living, agreeably to what the Prophet Isaiah observes, "Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." What is written, Luke xii. 45. is too just a picture of the temper and practice of the bulk of mankind: "They say in their heart, The Lord delayeth his coming; and thereupon presume to beat their

“ fellow-servants, and to eat, and drink,
“ and to be drunken:” yea, not the *fool-
ish* virgins only, but even the *wise*, are in
danger of slumbering while the bride-
groom tarrieth, as we read Matth. xxv. 5.

There is an unhappy tendency in our
nature to forget God. The best find en-
ough ado to overcome it; but the wick-
ed give full scope to it; and nothing but
chastisement, severe and present chastise-
ment, will bring them the length even of
a feigned submission to God. Hence the
observation is drawn, that times of adver-
sity have always been most friendly to re-
ligion; and they must know little of the
history of the world in general, and of
their own country in particular, who do
not agree in this remark. National pro-
sperity is certainly most desirable; we re-
gard it as a blessing, we pray for the con-
tinuance of it; and it is our duty to do
so: yet if we examine the annals of former
times, and do not turn away our eyes
from the real state of our own times, we
shall be obliged to acknowledge, that a
calm is often more hurtful than a storm,
both to the church and people of God.
True it is, that arts and sciences flourish,
and

and a form of godliness may perhaps prevail: but, alas! the life and power of it decay apace; vices formerly unknown, spring up like weeds in too rank a soil; even the best are apt to grow remiss and careless, wanton and secure.

What I apprehend to be most necessary upon this subject is, to inquire, whence this unnatural abuse of the divine patience proceeds; and to detect some of those false reasonings by which sinners derive encouragement to do evil, from that very exercise of goodness which ought to produce the quite contrary effect.

Now the principal causes of this abuse, or the steps whereby sinners arrive at the amazing pitch of wickedness described in my text, seem to be these following.

The delay of punishment gradually weakens those impressions of fear whereby the unpractised sinner is always alarmed at his entrance upon a wicked and flagitious course of life. No man becomes utterly profligate at once; Conscience will remonstrate to the young transgressor; and the struggle is oft-times sharp and long before this deputy of the supreme judge

can be wholly put to silence. It were superfluous to prove what every man feels, or at least must have felt, in some period of his life. Depraved as we are, sins of a grosser kind are always committed with some reluctance at their first commencement, and followed with remorse, and the dread of punishment: but when, after repeated acts of sin, the transgressor still finds himself safe, these painful feelings abate by degrees, the man waxeth bolder day after day, and thus proceeds from evil to worse, till, like Job's war-horse, he at length "mocks at fear," and rusheth headlong in his wicked course without any restraint. This I take to be the leading abuse of divine patience; which paves the way to every subsequent step of departure from God, till the sinner arrive at the last stage of impiety, *an heart fully set in him to do evil*. For as "the fear of God" is the beginning of wisdom; so the want of this fear may, with equal propriety, be styled the beginning of folly, or the introduction to a wicked and profligate life.

Having got thus far, he proceeds to call in question the *omniscience* of God, and to entertain

entertain some hope, that his iniquities may pass unobserved. Of such we read, Ps. lxxv. 5. "They encourage themselves in an evil matter; they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see us?" — And, Ps. x. 11. "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face, he will never see it." He begins to think that God taketh no notice of human affairs when vice passeth long unpunished; and thence he derives fresh courage, and persists in his career with growing intrepidity.

At length he acquires the boldness to impugn the holiness of God, and to form an idea of him that suits the corrupt disposition of his own heart. He endeavours to persuade himself, that the remorse he used to feel after the commission of sin, was purely owing to the prejudice of education, and the influence of some narrow principles instilled into his mind by his parents or tutors, before he was capable of judging for himself.

This step to a total degeneracy is strongly marked, Ps. l. 21. where God saith, "These things thou hast done, and I kept
" silence :

“silence : thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself.” Because God kept silence, and did not utter his anger in speedy vengeance, the sinner thought that he was altogether such a one as himself ; that virtue and vice were fictitious names, framed by credulous or designing men ; that God made no difference between them, but was every whit as well pleased with the one as with the other. — Dreadful abuse of the divine patience ! and yet I am afraid it is too prevalent in our day : else whence these secret whisperings among some who pretend to think above the common rate, that their constitution inclines them to such and such gratifications ; which therefore cannot be criminal, seeing the author of their being hath implanted these appetites in their frame, and of consequence must be held as consenting to the indulgence of them ? When punishment is long suspended, corruption too easily breeds such conceits as these ; and nothing but the rod, a sharp and sanctified rod, will suffice to expel them. Thus many interpret a mere delay of punishment as a certain token that their conduct is approved of :

of: and because God is not like man, weak and impotent to restrain his anger, hence they impiously conclude, that he doth certainly resemble him in another respect; I almost tremble to mention it, — that he is a lover of impurity; — nay, the very patron and author of sin.

From such premises as these, the determined sinner, without much hesitation, will eagerly draw the fatal inference, that the administration of the divine government shall always continue as it appears to his darkened mind at present; and that God doth neither mark iniquity now, nor will enter into judgement with sinners for it afterwards. We find the Psalmist proposing a question, Pl. x. 13. "Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God?" which he answers thus, "He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it." One of the most eminent saints under the old dispensation, (as we learn from the 73d Psalm), was almost carried off his feet, upon observing the prosperity of the wicked, insomuch that he put the question, "How doth God know, and is there knowledge in the Most High?" — Nay, he came the length to say, "Verily

“rily I have cleansed my heart in vain,
 “and washed my hands in innocence.”
 And if holy men, whose minds have been
 enlightened by the Spirit of God, are thus
 apt, for a season, to suspect the wisdom
 and righteousness of his administration,
 surely it is not to be wondered at, that
 wicked men, whose “hearts are hardened
 through the deceitfulness of sin,” should be
 so far deluded by temporal prosperity, as
 to dream, that justice shall never awaken,
 and that sin shall always pass unpunished.

By a progress of this kind do sinners ar-
 rive at the dreadful pitch of wickedness
 spoken of in my text. When they observe,
 that *sentence against an evil work is not speedi-
 ly executed*, they draw such false conclu-
 sions from it as those I have mentioned,
 till at length every band that should re-
 strain them is broken asunder, and their
 hearts become *fully set in them to do e-
 vil*.

From this account of the matter, you
 will be able to judge for yourselves, how
 far you are advanced in the road to a to-
 tal, I had almost called it an irrecover-
 able, degeneracy. If you have made a
 shift to silence conscience, or even to ren-
 der

der it more unfeeling than formerly it hath been, you have taken one very wide and dangerous step. But as you love your own souls, oh! take not another. Beware of listening to any objections against the *omniscience*, the *holiness*, or the *justice* of God: for if you do, in your present state of spiritual deadness, your case is more hazardous than I am able to describe; you are not far from the desperate situation of those whose *heart is fully set in them to do evil*.

AND now, my dear friends, as it is an undeniable truth, that this abuse of the divine patience is too frequent in our day, let me beg your attention for a little, till I have set before you the *folly* and *baseness* of such conduct, and the *fatal consequences* with which it must necessarily be attended. Consider, then,

1st, That to grow bolder in sin, because you are not *speedily* punished, is most *foolish*: for unless you have assurance of a full indemnity, and that sentence against your evil works shall never be executed, your conduct is obviously absurd and irrational. You have long escaped through the

patience and forbearance of God: but if you have the remotest suspicion, that judgement may one day overtake you; nay, if you are not absolutely certain, that it never shall; upon what principle of sound reason can you be easy for one moment? You do not know, but that already you have committed the last act of wickedness that God is to tolerate, and that the next transgression will bring down the fatal stroke, and plunge you into remediless ruin. You live by a mere act of grace; your fate depends upon a reprieve, which the Sovereign may protract or shorten at his pleasure; and how mad is it to presume upon so precarious a tenure?—Or if you have conceived any hope of escape, allow me to ask you, upon what ground is your hope built? It would need to be a strong foundation indeed, that is to carry all the weight you are disposed to lay upon it.—Have you any promise or declaration on the part of God, or any dictate of unprejudiced reason, that saith you shall be safe? Produce your security, that we may know it. If you have nothing more to say, than that you hope to escape, because you wish it, alas! this is nothing to
the

the purpose; for we read of some fools who say, or wish, in their heart, there were no God; and yet a God there is, who will prove a *consuming fire* to them.— You dare not say, that sin never was punished; for all history, both sacred and profane, would contradict you; and it were easy to quote many examples of sinners, who have escaped as long, perhaps longer, than you, and yet have been punished at last: so that, unless you have something altogether peculiar to yourselves, some special indulgence, which the world hath never yet heard of, your conduct betrays the height of madness, a degree of phrenzy which no term of reproach can fully express.

adly, It is no less *base* than foolish. Ingratitude is universally condemned, and branded with infamy. We reckon it the mark of a base disingenuous spirit, to forget favours received, or even to neglect making a proper return, when the obliged party hath it in his power to do it: but if one shall injure his benefactor, and render evil for good, such a person must become an object of universal contempt and detestation, and none will be found so hardy as to plead in his defence. And yet the abuse

of divine patience, to which my text refers, is a species of baseness that exceeds ingratitude; and indeed no word is to be found in any language I know, that is of sufficient force to express its malignity, or to convey an adequate idea of its abominable nature. No man ever injured his benefactor, *because* he was his benefactor: interfering interests, or selfish views, may cause unequal returns for benefits conferred; but in the case before us, there is something entirely different from this. Sinners not only injure, or rather *attempt* to injure, their greatest benefactor, the God in whom they live and move, by whose power and goodness they are supported every moment; but his goodness to them, in times past, and the hope of its continuance, are the very things that embolden them to offend him; and "*because* sentence against their evil works is not speedily executed, *therefore* their heart is fully set in them to do evil." Devils may be *capable* of this, but *guilty* of it they are not; their forlorn condition hath put it beyond their reach; the immediate execution of the doom they had incurred, afforded them no opportunity of trampling upon the mercy of God: so that, with regard

regard to the *act* of sin, we plainly exceed them in this respect. O that men could be brought to view their conduct in its true light, I am sure they would loath and abhor themselves on account of it. To burthen God's patience *because* it is great; to load him with insults, *because*, out of pity to us, he is slow in resenting them; to harden our hearts by that very mercy which should dissolve and soften them: this is worse than *devilish*; there is something in this so perverse, so monstrous, so unnatural, that one would be tempted to suspect, that some malicious slanderer of human nature had forged the accusation, were we not all conscious of the truth of it, and more or less convicted of this horrid baseness by the testimony of our own consciences. — These considerations, methinks, should be sufficient to deter us from burdening the patience of God any more. But I have further to add, in the *3d* place, That the *consequences* of this abuse shall, in the issue, be most *fatal* to the sinner himself. — You cannot defeat the purposes of God, nor impair his glory in any degree; the weapons of your rebellion must recoil upon yourselves; for God will

will be magnified in them that perish, as well as admired in those who are saved. As the justice of his nature renders his mercy more wonderful, so mercy abused will make justice to shine forth with greater splendour. Sinners must stand speechless before the judgement-seat, and shall find nothing to plead in their own defence, when the judge shall say to them, "Ye would not come unto me, that you might have life." Long did I stand at the door and knock, loudly did I call upon you to turn and live; but ye set at nought all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof; therefore now eat the fruit of your own doings, and fill yourselves with your own devices. Because when I called, ye refused; when I stretched out my hand, ye did not regard; therefore do I laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh, and leave you to inherit that wrath which you treasured up for yourselves, while mercy courted your acceptance, but did not prevail.

Thus far have I spoken for the conviction and reproof of those who have hitherto been abusing the divine patience in the manner

manner described in my text: and if such transgressors still remain unmoved, it is not because the considerations I have suggested want weight, but because they want feeling. May the exalted Prince and Saviour, who alone can give the spirit and grace of repentance, “open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified through faith that is in him.”

UPON the whole, let each of us give unto God the glory of his patience, and acknowledge, with humble gratitude, his sparing mercy towards himself in particular. O my friends! with what multiplied provocations are we all chargeable? Let us pitch upon the most innocent day of our life since we came to the full exercise of reason, and say, if we dare, that we are willing to have our final state determined by the behaviour of that one day, according to the measure of legal justice. Can conscience remind us of nothing that needs forgiveness or pardoning mercy? Surely none of us will be so hardy as to
 say

say this: our own hearts do, and must condemn us: how guilty then must we appear in the sight of that God who is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things? Were we chargeable with nothing worse than omissions of duty, yet these alone might justly have stopped the current of his beneficence, nay brought down his wrath upon such unfaithful and negligent servants; but when to these we add our many sins of commission, our sins against knowledge, conviction, and reproof, how great is their amount? how heinous their demerit?—How astonishing then is the patience of God!—The saints in heaven are amazed at it; “the souls of them that were slain, for the testimony which they held,” who are better acquainted with the nature of God, and the order of his government, than we can be, are represented in the book of the Revelation, ch. vi. 10. as expressing the greatest surprise at the slowness of his wrath; nay, as being at a loss to reconcile his patience with his holiness and truth. “They cry with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge, and avenge
I “our

"our blood on them that dwell on the
 "earth?" And it can be owing to no-
 thing but the grossest insensibility, if our
 hearts are not filled with amazement at
 those treasures of mercy which have already
 been expended upon us; and the over-
 flowings of that goodness by which we
 are at this moment supported and preserved.
 How many of our companions have
 long ago been summoned away to receive
 their doom? yet we still live in the arms
 of mercy. How often has death been pre-
 sented to our view, and the sentence (in
 our own apprehension) just ready to be ex-
 ecuted, *cut down this cumberer of the*
ground; when, lo! mercy interposed, and
 prevailed for a further respite and trial?—
 What shall we say then? "He is God,
 "and not man; and therefore it is that
 "we are not consumed."—O let our souls,
 and all that is within us, be stirred up to
 bless him, because he is good, and hath
 not executed sentence against our multi-
 plied offences.

Let convinced sinners, in particular,
 take encouragement from the patience and
 long-suffering of God. It is one of the
 VOL. II. G *God will not* *deadly*

deadly artifices of the adversary, who continually "goeth about seeking whom he "may devour," to discourage the newly-awakened soul, by whispering, that the season of mercy is past, that the door is shut, and he is come too late. But be not dismayed, you are on the way to the fountain of love and grace; go on, and you shall find more than it is possible for you to conceive. — You are going to him, "who came to seek and to save that which "was lost;" — that good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep, by whose merit and intercession you have been kept alive till this hour; who invites the chief of sinners to come to him; and hath expressly said, "Him that cometh to me, I "will in no wise cast out." — He is "the Lamb of God," meekness and gentleness itself. — "He will not break the bruised "reed, nor quench the smoking flax." Did he spare you, while your heart was as hard as a stone? and will he destroy you, when, by the convincing influences of his own Spirit, it is softened, nay broken, with sorrow? — Impossible! — Go forward into his presence; cast yourself at his feet; implore

implore his protection; and as God liveth, thy soul shall be safe.

To conclude, The patience of God affords the strongest consolation to those who are already reconciled to him through the great Mediator. He who waited so long upon you, and at length gained your consent, will most assuredly keep you, and perfect his own work in your complete salvation. The mercy he is still exercising towards enemies, teacheth his friends what they may lawfully hope to receive. Great are your privileges; but, at the same time, great and manifold are your obligations. Hath much been forgiven you? then you ought to love the more, and to shew the truth and fervour of your love, by an unreserved respect to all his commandments. —“Be followers of God, as dear children.” Remember, that nothing is more unseemly, nothing more offensive, than the provocations of sons and of daughters. “See, then, that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise;” — and let the same goodness which led you to repent-

ance, be continually present to your minds, that under its sweet, but powerful influence, you may bring forth, in rich abundance, all those fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God. *Amen.*

SER-

S E R M O N III. *

2 CORINTHIANS iv. 5.

We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants, for Jesus sake,

WHEN God descended upon Sinai to give laws to his ancient people Israel, the awful tokens of his presence, the thunderings and lightnings, the sound of the trumpet, and the smoking of the mountain, struck the whole camp with such consternation and dread, that they were constrained to remove, and stand a-far off. They could not bear the exceeding lustre of his glory, notwithstanding the thick darkness with which it was veiled; and therefore addressed Moses in these remarkable words, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God

* Preached at the introduction of the Reverend Mr Charles Stuart to the church of Cramond, the Sabbath after his ordination, 1773.

" speak

“ speak with us, lest we die.” From which authentic piece of sacred history, we may justly conclude, that our nature is too weak, in its present state, to sustain an immediate intercourse with the Deity : For which cause, God, in great condescension, is pleased to speak to us by men like ourselves ; that, on the one hand, we may not want the benefit of his instruction ; and, on the other hand, that we may not be overpowered by the too dazzling splendour and majesty of the teacher.

Under the old dispensation, besides the stated ministers of religion, God, “ at sundry times,” sent extraordinary messengers on special errands to the Jewish church ; furnishing them with such credentials of their mission, as were sufficient to convince that highly-favoured people, that they came from God ; and consequently, that in every thing relative to their particular message so attested, they were bound to hearken to them as unto God himself. — This we have no warrant to look for under the gospel : The whole counsel of God, so far as it regards the children of men, is clearly revealed, and committed to writing. Nothing is to be added

added to it, or taken from it; nay, could it be supposed, that an angel were to come from heaven, and publish any thing that differed from, or even that was not already expressed in the scripture-record, instead of our being obliged to give him a hearing, we are told, that he himself would "be accursed" for so doing.

Nevertheless, that this complete and finished revelation might lack no advantage, and that all excuse might be taken away from those who should either contemn or counteract its dictates, our Lord Jesus Christ, "God manifested in the flesh," the great "apostle and high-priest of our profession," hath instituted the ordinance of a gospel-ministry, and committed to men the word of reconciliation, charging them to proclaim, in the ears of their brethren, "all the words of this life," which are already delivered in writing to the church; with a special promise, that in the faithful discharge of this important trust, "he will be with them always, even unto the end of the world." And to add greater weight to their holy ministrations, he hath expressly declared, that the doctrines and precepts of his word,

word, which they publish in his name, are to be received with the same meekness and submission as if they were spoken immediately by his own blessed mouth: Luke x. 16. "He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth me: and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."—I am sensible, that some proud ambitious churchmen have, "with great swelling words of vanity," magnified their office beyond what is meet; laying claim to that kind of precedence which belongs to high rank, or other worldly distinctions, which men have devised for the benefit or embellishment of civil society. But this is only a false blazon, that doth by no means suit the ministerial character. "Be not ye called Rabbi," said the blessed Jesus, "for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren."—"Whoever is great among you, let him be your minister, even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Your true dignity consists in your usefulness, and he that stoops lowest for the good of others, is highest in my esteem.

stem. Worldly pomp doth only tarnish the glory of my servants, as it cannot consist with those self-denying duties which belong to their employment. Do you reckon yourselves most honoured, not when men give you title and place, but when they hearken to the instructions you receive from me, and embrace the saving message with which I have intrusted you.

— This, though in words somewhat different, is, in my apprehension, a genuine and summary account of what our Saviour taught the first ministers of his church, with regard to the nature and end of their office. And the language of Paul, in the passage before us, is obviously formed upon this original constitution: *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake.*

From an example of such unquestionable authority, we may justly, and without hesitation, conclude, that *to preach Christ Jesus the Lord*, is the distinguishing characteristic and proper employment of a gospel-minister. And this is the observation which I propose to illustrate in the following discourse.

It may be affirmed with truth, that something concerning Christ hath been the principal subject of every revelation that came from God, downward from the original promise made to our first parents, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent*. The Apostle Jude, informs us, that "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these things, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all." Moses spake of him when he said unto the fathers, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you." All the extraordinary messengers under the old dispensation, were raised up by God for this very purpose, to foretell the coming of the promised Messiah, and, by the doctrine of repentance, gradually to prepare the world to receive him. The words of Peter to Cornelius are clear and strong upon this head, Acts x. 43. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins." This,

This, he tells us, was the subject of their own most delightful inquiry: 1 Pet. i. 10.

“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”

And if Christ was an object of such importance to those who lived before his manifestation in the flesh, it cannot surprise us to find, that they who could testify that he *was come*, and had finished the work that was given him to do, should, in all their writings and discourses, dwell upon him as their constant and most delightful theme.—The author of this epistle informs the Corinthians, that “he determined not to know any thing among them, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” And elsewhere, he saith, that “he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord.” This was that “chosen vessel,” whom the Lord converted in a miraculous way, and

sent forth to bear his name before the Gentiles, and kings, and children of Israel; and his zeal and fidelity in executing his trust, appear evidently from his writings. He made Christ the foundation of all his sermons, as we read 1 Cor. iii. 10. ver. 1. "I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every one take heed how he buildeth. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is *Jesus Christ*;" intimating, in the strongest manner, that all preaching which doth not refer to Christ, and lead to him, is like building a castle upon the loose sand, which may please the fancy for a little, but as it wants a foundation, will soon tumble down, to the equal disgrace and hurt of the builder. And as Christ was the foundation, so was he likewise the end of his preaching; and not of his only, but of all his brethren in the apostleship, and fellow-labourers in the ministry; as is fully expressed in the text: *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake.* We seek not to advance our own credit and interest; our sole aim is to render *Jesus* great and amiable in your esteem;

seem, and we desire to be considered in no other light, than as your ministers or servants for Jesus sake.

But what are we to understand by preaching Christ? This question I shall endeavour to answer in the first place;—after which I shall show, that this is the proper employment, and distinguishing characteristic of a gospel-minister;—and then conclude the subject with some practical improvement.

I begin with answering the question, What are we to understand by preaching Christ Jesus the Lord?

It plainly imports, that we make Christ the principal subject of our sermons.

It is by no means sufficient that we speak of him occasionally; we ought of set purpose to unfold the scripture doctrines concerning him, that men may be acquainted both with his person and undertaking, and have clear and enlarged views of that glorious deliverer, to whom they are indebted for all that they possess in a present world, and for all they hope to enjoy in the next. In particular, we

must

ought

ought frequently to remind our hearers, that he who came to seek and to save lost sinners of mankind, is "the beloved and
"only begotten Son of God," — "the
"brightness of the Father's glory, and the
"express image of his person;" — "that
"Word which in the beginning was with
"God, and was God, by whom all things
"were made, and without whom was
"not any thing made that is made."
That in order to purchase redemption for us, he condescended to become the Son of man; or, in the emphatical language of the Holy Spirit, that "the Word was made
"flesh," and assumed our nature into a personal union with his own divinity: That this incarnate Word, or God manifested in the flesh, after he had published a most pure and perfect law, and exhibited an *example* of equal and as absolute perfection, at length laid down his life as a true and proper sacrifice, to satisfy the justice of God, and to expiate the guilt of an elect world: That having thus made *his soul an offering for sin*, he soon after triumphed over death, and him that had the power of death, by rising from the grave, and ascending to his Father's
right

right hand, where he now sitteth as a priest upon his throne, interceding for his people, and dispensing those gifts which he purchased with his blood; from whence he shall come again in the character of judge, taking vengeance upon them that obey not his gospel, "to be glorified and "admired in those that believe," and to complete the consolation and joy of his saints. These important truths ought to be fully explained, and repeatedly insisted upon: "For this is life eternal, to know "the only true God, and Jesus Christ "whom he hath sent." The natures and offices of our great Redeemer, the glory of his godhead, the merit of his blood, and the efficacy of his Spirit; the constitution of that covenant whereof he is mediator, with all the promises thereof, which are exceeding great and precious; and especially the way or manner in which guilty polluted creatures are vitally united to this all-sufficient Saviour, who, "of God, "is made unto them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" These, and other doctrines connected with them, are as necessary to the souls of men, nay infinitely more so, than

than food is to their bodies. Other things perhaps are desirable to be known; but these must be known, or people are undone for ever: and therefore none can be said to *preach Christ* who overlook these important, these essential truths, or treat them in a careless superficial manner.

2dly, *To preach Christ Jesus the Lord*, is to handle every other subject of discourse in such a way, as to keep Christ continually in the eye of our hearers.—We must acknowledge him as the author of the truths we deliver, and improve them so as to lead men to him. It is not sufficient that we publish the laws of Christ, unless we publish them as his laws, and press obedience to them by those motives and arguments which are peculiar to his gospel. In recommending the great duties of morality, we should represent them as the genuine effects and proper evidences of faith in Christ, and love to God; directing our hearers at the same time to the Spirit of Christ for assistance, and to his merit for the acceptance of all their services: and, after all, we should remind them, that as they are at best “unprofitable servants,” instead of depending upon any thing done

Other things than food is to their bodies. by them, as the ground of their justification, in whole or in part, they must renounce all confidence in the flesh, and seek to be found in Christ alone, not "having their own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith."

These are not trivial circumstances, as some represent them to be; on the contrary, they are essential to the right preaching of Christ; and if they be omitted, I can easily conceive it possible for a minister to preach all his life long upon the moral precepts of Christianity, without any other effect, than to lead his people away from the Saviour, and to carry them hoodwinked into everlasting perdition. The apostles of our Lord, and they surely are the best and most approved patterns for our imitation, introduced, upon all occasions, the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, both into their discourses and epistles, and never failed to press the duties they enjoined by those regards which are due to Christ himself. Thus humility and self-denial are recommended by the lowliness and patience of Christ: Chastity

is enforced by this consideration, "that
 "our bodies are the members of Christ,
 "and the temples of his Spirit." We are
 exhorted to abound in alms-deeds, "be-
 "cause Christ for our sakes became poor,"
 and in testimony of our thankfulness to
 God "for his unspeakable gift." Husbands
 are charged to love their wives, "as Christ
 "loved his church:" and servants are
 commanded to be faithful and diligent,
 "that they may adorn the doctrine of
 "God their Saviour." In short, Christ
 is so deeply engraved upon every moral
 precept in the New-Testament writings,
 that we must read his name upon every
 duty; nay, we cannot efface his name,
 without debasing, or rather vitiating, the
 duty itself, and casting away the most
 powerful inducement to the practice of it.
 I therefore said, that to *preach Christ*, is
 not only to publish what the scriptures say
 concerning him, but likewise to handle
 every other subject of discourse in such a
 manner, as to keep Christ continually in
 the eye of our hearers; and they whose
 schemes of religion do not admit of this,
 may be assured, without any further ex-
 amination,

amination, that their schemes differ widely from the gospel of Christ.

3dly, To preach Christ Jesus the Lord, is to make the advancement of his kingdom, and the salvation of men, the sole aim of our preaching. We must not seek our own glory, but the glory of him who sent us. If we serve ourselves, we must reward ourselves as we can. Such only can look for the approbation of Christ, who make the honour of his name, and the happiness of mankind, the ultimate end of all their ministrations. They that usurp the sacred office from interested views, or merely to gain a subsistence in a present world, will find in the issue, that they have turned the best and most salutary employment into a very bad trade, and only intitled themselves to more and heavier stripes when the chief shepherd shall appear. We are ambassadors for Christ, saith our Apostle, at the 20th verse of the following chapter, "as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." This is our proper business, the errand upon which we are sent. The glory of God, and the salvation of men, are the great and

good ends of the pastoral office; and he who loseth sight of these, or proposeth any end that is different from them, may acquire the reputation of a learned, an ingenious, or an eloquent orator, but cannot be styled a *preacher of Christ*.—This will further appear from the

Second thing proposed, which was, to show, That *preaching Christ* is the proper business, and the distinguishing characteristic of a gospel-minister.

Can any thing be more reasonable, than that they who profess to derive their authority from Christ, should make him the principal subject of their sermons, and recommend him to the esteem and love of their hearers? And, on the other hand, can any thing be more unreasonable, can any thing be more unjust, than to assume the character of his messengers, while they seldom or never mention his name, or speak of him in such a way, as rather tends to breed contempt of him, than to render him precious to the souls of men? But what I would chiefly observe is, that *preaching Christ Jesus the Lord* is the great means which God hath appointed for the
conversion

conversion and final salvation of sinners; and therefore it is not only highly reasonable, but absolutely necessary; and they are cruel to men, as well as unfaithful to God, who do not make conscience of this important duty. Lectures upon morality may be of use to restrain men from scandalous sins, but it is the gospel alone that can save a sinner. A preacher by discoursing well upon the duties that belong to *self-government* and *righteousness*, may correct many outward disorders in the life, and produce such a change in the heart itself, as to convert those into *men*, who formerly were depraved to such a degree, that they differed very little from the *brutes* that perish. But after they become men, the greatest change doth still remain: those men must be converted into *saints*; they must be changed into the divine image, their very nature must be renewed, before they can be meet for the enjoyment of God. "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." and it is the gospel alone which the Spirit renders powerful for producing this effect. Morality grows out of faith in Christ, as the branches grow from the stock. This, and

and this only, is the principle of that holiness, without which no man shall see God. Whosoever therefore, would preach morality with any hope of success, must begin here, and lay the foundation of it in that faith which purifieth the heart, and worketh by love, otherwise his sermons may supply fewel to pride and vain-glory, but shall never be the means of saving one soul. In vain do we attempt to improve the fruit, till the tree be made good. Let sinners be first ingrafted into Christ, and then works of righteousness will follow in course; as our blessed Lord hath taught us, John xv. 4. 5. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me [or separated from me] ye can do nothing." Accordingly we find, that the preaching Christ, or the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, hath in every age been the means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation:

salvation: and in the same proportion that this hath been neglected, the power of godliness hath declined and languished, till a cold formality hath at length given way to the open profession of infidelity itself. It was the observation of a judicious and pious writer upon this subject, "That where a great and universal neglect of preaching Christ hath prevailed in a Christian nation, it hath given a fatal occasion to the growth of Deism and infidelity: for when people have heard the sermons of their ministers for many years together, and find little of Christ in them, they have taken it into their heads, that men may be very good, and go safe to heaven without Christianity; and therefore, though they dwell in a land where the gospel is professed, they imagine there is no need they should be Christians. — To which I may add, that it is no less observable, on the other hand, that where ever there has been any revival of religion, it hath uniformly been introduced and carried on, through the blessing of God, by preaching the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. These, and these alone, have been, and e-

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ver will be, "the wisdom and power of God
unto salvation."

The application of what hath been said to the ministers of religion, is so direct and obvious, that I need not enlarge upon it; and therefore any further improvement I am to make of the subject, shall be addressed, not to them that *preach*, but to those that *hear*.—And what hath been delivered, may serve to inform them what sort of preaching they ought chiefly to value. I am afraid, that by many the great and essential truths of the gospel are but little regarded: like the Athenians of old, they require something new, something that may gratify an itching ear, and furnish matter for a vain imagination to work upon. But this, my brethren, is equally perverse and foolish. Who should regard what a servant saith, if he doth not believe in the mind of his master? And yet I have often observed, that the greatest number of hearers never seem so well pleased, as when ministers speak of those things that are most foreign to their instructions. Did we come upon a disagreeable errand: were we charged with an embassy in which

they to whom we speak have little or no concern; such conduct might be accounted for: but when the message we bring is not only most gracious, but likewise treats of matters in which they are immediately and most deeply interested, what words can express the folly and perverseness of those who shut their ears against it, while they greedily open them to every thing else? Hear what the angel said to the shepherds at Bethlehem, Luke ii. 10. "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." And what were these tidings which an angel was sent to publish, and introduced with such a high commendation of their importance and worth? They are recorded, ver. 11. "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." "And suddenly," as it follows, "there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will to good-will men." And yet, be astonished, O heavens! blush, O earth! this gospel sermon, which angels reckoned themselves honoured to preach, and delivered with

such rapturous exultation and joy, as by multitudes in our day, though wise, and able, and unworthy of their attention. To remedy this shameful, but growing evil, hath been the principal aim of my present discourse. I have told you what is our duty, that from thence you may learn your own; for the one must necessarily be suited to the other. The same authority which commandeth us to *preach*, doth virtually command and oblige you to *hear*: and if the pure doctrines of the gospel ought to be the subject of our sermons, it naturally follows, that you should neither expect nor desire any other. Ponder with due attention those awful words in the two verses preceding my text: "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." And let each of us pray, in terms of the verse that immediately follows, that "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, may shine in the hearts of both preachers
" and

“and, hearers, to give the light of the
“knowledge of his glory, in the face of
“Jesus;” that “we all, beholding, as in a
“glass, the glory of God, may be chan-
“ged into the same image, from glory to
“glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Amen.

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Amen.”

he said to Thomas, "I am the way, and
the truth, and the life: no man cometh
unto the Father but by me." And in

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at the bar of the Jewish Sanhedrim: When
speaking of him as the Father's Son, he said,
COLOSSIANS, 1. 15.—19.

by the builders, which was now become
Who is the image of the invisible God, the
first-born of every creature, for by him
were all things created that are in heaven,
and that are in earth, visible and invisible,
whether they be thrones, or dominions, or
principalities, or powers: all things were
created by him, and for him. And he is
before all things, and by him all things
consist. And he is the head of the body,
the church: who is the beginning, the
first-born from the dead: that in all things
he might have the pre-eminence. For it
pleased the Father, that in him should all
things dwell.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ is uniformly
represented to us in the sacred scrip-
tures as the Saviour of fallen man; a Sa-
viour absolutely necessary; nay as the
ONLY Saviour.—To this character he laid
claim, in clear and express terms, when
he

he said to Thomas, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." And in this important light did Peter set him forth at the bar of the Jewish Sanhedrim: When speaking of him as the stone set at nought by the builders, which was now become the head of the corner, he added these memorable words: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Of the same import was the testimony of that illustrious prophet who was sent to prepare the way before him, and to introduce him to his public ministry by baptism: He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Accordingly we are told by the Apostle John, that "this is the command of God," the first in order under the gospel-dispensation and which claims the title of his peculiar commandment: "that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." It is, or at least it ought to be, unnecessary

sary to observe, that this intimation of the divine will is sufficient, by itself, to constitute our duty. It surely belongs to the great Lord of all, to dispense his own grace by what hand, and in what manner, it pleaseth him; and in no case doth it become the creatures of his power to say unto him, What doest thou? or, Why doest thou thus?—Elihu spake the words of truth and soberness, when he said unto Job, “God is greater than man; why doest thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of *any* of his matters;” that is, he is not bound to explain the reasons of his conduct; and none hath a right to demand that he should. But glory to his name, that with regard to the *greatest* of all his works, that dispensation of grace which angels desire to look into, and upon which the happiness of a whole order of his creatures doth depend, it cannot justly be said, that he giveth no account of *this* matter. He hath not only interposed his authority as sovereign, and commanded sinners to believe on his Son, that they may be saved; but he hath likewise, in some measure, unfolded the secrets of his eternal counsel, and in particular,

ular, given us such encouraging views of that mighty one upon whom he hath laid our help, as render his command to believe on him at once the strongest and most endearing expression, both of his wisdom and of his love: so that they who refuse to comply with this command, counteract the soundest principles of reason, resist the clearest and most satisfying evidence, and shall be found, in the final issue of things, to have been equally chargeable with cruelty to themselves; with ingratitude, the vilest ingratitude, to their benefactor; and the most obstinate rebellion against their Sovereign Lord.

A few remarks upon the verses I have been reading, will serve to illustrate what I have just now said. And I have chosen this passage for the subject of my present discourse, in hope that God may bless it for the conviction of some who have hitherto rejected his gracious counsel; but chiefly with a view to confirm the faith, and to brighten the joy, of believers in Christ, by showing them, that he in whom they trust, is in all respects worthy to be depended upon, and will assuredly carry forward the work he hath begun, till it shall

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shall be perfected at length in their complete salvation.

The information that is here given us concerning our Redeemer, may be comprehended under the following heads.

First, What he is in himself;—or, his original dignity.

Secondly, What he is to us;—or, the station he holds in his church. And,

Thirdly, His qualifications for the discharge of what belongs to that station.

What the apostle saith upon the *First* of these particulars, amounts to something more than a simple assertion of our Lord's divinity. It is such an enlarged and accurate description of proper and essential godhead, as cannot possibly be applied to any inferior being. The only expression that hath an appearance of difficulty is in the close of ver. 15. where Christ is styled *the first-born of every creature*. But the difficulty evaporates, when we attend to the explanation of that title which the apostle subjoins, or rather indeed to the reasons he assigns for giving him that designation. No sooner has he called him *the first-born of every creature*, than he immediately

mediately adds, *For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him.* And that no room might be left for the remotest suspicion that he himself might have been created, *eternally*, in the most absolute sense of that word, is directly ascribed to him in the 17th verse: *And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.* For surely he who existed *before all things*, must himself be without beginning, or from everlasting. Hence it appears, that this designation, *the first-born of every creature*, is of the same import with that other form of expression which the apostle useth; Heb. i. 2. where, having styled him *the Son of God*, he adds, "*whom he hath appointed heir of all things*" And both serve to denote that universal dominion which our Lord hath by inheritance, as the only begotten of the Father, of the same essence with himself, "*the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person*." An image so express, that when Philip said to our Lord, "*Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us*," he

Vol. II. L gave

gave no answer but this, "Have I
 "been so long with you, and yet hast
 "thou not known me, Philip? He that
 "hath seen me, hath seen the Father;
 "believest thou not that I am in the Fa-
 "ther, and the Father in me?" Which
 is farther explained by what he said on an-
 other occasion, "I and the Father are
 "one."

It would be highly improper, when we
 have such agreeable work before us, to
 enter into the thorny field of controver-
 sy: nevertheless, as so much of our com-
 fort depends upon the persuasion we have,
 that he who came to save us is truly God,
 I cannot close this head, without request-
 ing you to compare what is written in
 the first verse of the Bible, "In the begin-
 "ning God created the heaven and the
 "earth," with the introduction to John's
 gospel, "In the beginning was the Word,
 "and the Word was with God, and the
 "Word was God. All things were made
 "by him; and without him was not a-
 "ny thing made that was made." And
 if to these you add that obvious conclu-

Preached on a Communion-Sabbath.

Emanuel,

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tion of enlightened reason, Heb. iii. v. 23
 "Every house is builded by some man;
 "but He that built all things is God, you
 will discover at once the true dignity of
 him in whom we are commanded to trust,
 and see with what strict propriety of lan-
 guage he is styled "the Son of the living
 "God," "the great God and our Sa-
 "viour," and, "God over all, blessed
 "for ever."

Having thus briefly illustrated his essen-
 tial dignity, or what he is in himself, let
 us now consider,

Secondly, What he is to us. This we
 learn from the 18th verse, where the ap-
 postle calls him *the head of the body, the*
church. Which leads us to view him as
 "the head of the woman," the Word made
 flesh, the Son of God, by whom all things
 were created, uniting himself to human
 nature in the person of Jesus Christ; that
 as our Master and brother, he might re-
 deem the forfeited inheritance; and by
 suffering in our room, the just for the un-
 just, might bring us to God. It is
 plain, that the station here assigned to
 Christ belongs to him in the character of
 our

Emanuel, "which is, being interpreted, "God with us," or, "God manifested in the flesh." Accordingly he is styled, in immediate connection with his headship, *the first-born from the dead*; which necessarily supposes his previous incarnation and sufferings. And the church, which is here called *his body*, is expressly said by Paul, in the charge which he gave to the elders of Ephesus, to have been "purchased by him with his own blood." Here, my brethren, he is represented to us in such an endearing relation, as cannot fail, if we understand it aright, to fill our hearts at once with the highest admiration, the warmest gratitude, and most triumphant joy. Christ is said to be "the head of all principality and power," at the 10th verse of the following chapter; but it is not added, *these are his body*. In like manner, we are told, Eph. i. at the close, that "God, who raised him from the dead, hath set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath

" put

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“put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the church.” That is, he hath placed him at the head of all things, and given him supreme dominion over them; so that the highest angels are only ministers, or servants, in his kingdom, whom he sends forth to minister to the heirs of salvation. But his relation to his church, though it includes dominion, yet it carries in it a more close and intimate connection. He is not only head over his church, in respect of supreme authority, as a king is the political head over his subjects; but he is the head of his church, in respect of vital influence: for so the apostle himself explains it in the following chapter, *verf. 19.* He is that head “from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” But your time will not permit me to enlarge upon this subject: let it suffice at present to observe, that *what* Adam was in the first creation, *that* is Christ in the new creation. Hence he gets the name of the *second Adam*; and it is expressly said of the first Adam, *Rom. v. 14.* “that he was
“ the

"the figure of him that was to come." I shall not pretend to trace out the resemblance between these two different HEADS in all its extent; and yet it is obvious, that a great part of the scripture language which is employed to describe the nature of that station which Christ holds in the church, not only alludes to this resemblance, but is so much founded upon it, that without some just conception of the figure or type, our views of the antitype must be very dark and imperfect.

If we look at the state of things in the first creation, we shall find Adam placed in a station of the highest importance. Besides the dominion that was given him over the inferior creatures, he was constituted, in the most proper sense of the word, the head of mankind, in as much as "of that one blood were to be made all the nations of men that should dwell upon the face of the whole earth." The life of all his posterity was deposited in him. He was the root, and his descendants, in all their successive generations, are the branches which grow out of it. This is the plain account which the scriptures give us; and the closeness of our connection

nection with the first Adam is fatally illustrated by its effects, which cannot escape our observation. It is too apparent, that life is conveyed to us under the same awful forfeiture which Adam incurred; for in consequence of the sentence pronounced against him on account of his transgression, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return," we find in fact, that "it is appointed unto all men once to die," and that "there is no discharge in that warfare."

This is the figure by which we are taught to form our conceptions of Jesus Christ, and of the place he holds in that new creation, which is here distinguished by the names of *his church* and *his body*. And to those who are acquainted with what the scriptures say concerning Christ, many circumstances will occur from the hints I have already suggested, in which the resemblance between the first and second Adam may easily be traced with the most critical exactness. But, blessed be God, there is one circumstance of the greatest importance in which the resemblance does not hold, as will appear from

the

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the information the apostle gives us con-
cerning the ~~blind~~ particular of ~~darkness~~
of, namely, ~~to wait a short of~~
ghost, till, with a shout of
could say, "It is finished."

III. The qualifications of our Redeemer,
for performing what belongs to him as the
head of his church.

It pleased the Father, saith he, ver. 19.
that in him should all fulness dwell.

The first Adam received the gift of life
from God, which he held in trust for all
his posterity, upon a condition the most
gentle and easy that can possibly be ima-
gined: but he failed in the performance
of it; and thus by one man ~~is~~ entered
"into the world, and death by sin: so
that ever since that fatal trespass, "death
hath passed upon all men."

The SECOND ADAM received the grant
of eternal life for his church, upon terms no
less severe than his obedience unto death,
even the death of the cross; that sin being
condemned in the flesh, mercy and truth
might meet together upon the apostate
race, righteousness and peace might em-
brace each other. But difficult as the terms
were, he not only punctually, but cheer-
fully, fulfilled them, inasmuch that under

all the pain and ignominy of the cross, he would not bow his head, and yield up the ghost, till, with a shout of triumph, he could say, "It is finished."

"The first man Adam was made a living soul; but the second Adam was made a quickening spirit." "The first man was of the earth earthy: the second man was the Lord from heaven."

In the head of the first creation, there dwelt indeed a fulness, but it was only the fulness of a creature: whereas all fulness resides in the head of the new creation, or, as it is elsewhere expressed in this same epistle, "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Here, my brethren, expression fails; an ocean opens to our view that hath neither bottom nor shore,—the Godhead! — the fulness of the Godhead! — all the fulness of the Godhead! — How flat, how unmeaning, is the language of men, when applied to a subject which angels themselves are unable to comprehend? — O glorious constitution of grace! worthy of him, whose name, whose essence, is love; and infinitely becoming the wisdom of that Sovereign, whose work is perfect,

“and all whose ways are judgement.” With such an object in our eye, can we refrain from crying out, “Let Israel rejoice in him that made him; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King?” Well might Paul say, “I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.” This is the endearing peculiarity of the gospel-covenant, that all the blessings of it are secured against forfeiture, in the hands of him who hath already fulfilled the terms of the grant, and finished the work which was given him to do:—who, as he died to purchase those blessings, so he ever liveth to dispense them:—ONE who by nature is God as well as man; and in whom, as the Word incarnate, and mediator of the covenant, *it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell*, for enriching, to the utmost capacity of created beings, all the members of that *body* whereof he is the *head*.

But what are the blessings of this well-ordered covenant?—Let your own necessities dictate the answer.—Say, my brethren, what do you need?

“Is it the pardon of sin? look back to the 14th verse of this chapter:—“In Christ we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”—“He hath made peace by the blood of his cross,” as we read vers. 20.; and “the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin.” He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”—So that now there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”—And O how blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, whose transgressions are covered, and to whom the Lord imputeth not his sin!

This is a great, a necessary blessing; but great though it be, yet it is not commensurate to all the necessities of such creatures as we are.—Man, by the apostasy, is not only liable to condemnation, nay, lying under sentence of death; but that sentence in part is already executed: his *soul* is dead, separated from God, the fountain of life. Thus it is written, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Nay, the carnal mind is enmity against
 "God;" for it is not subject to the law of
 "God," neither indeed can be. Can the
 death of a soul be expressed in stronger and
 more significant terms? Must not that
 spirit be dead, which is incapable of dis-
 cerning the only objects that are suited to
 its nature, and of relishing the only enjoy-
 ments by which a spiritual being can sub-
 sist and be happy?

In this state every mere child of Adam
 cometh into the world; for "that which
 is born of the flesh is flesh," and can
 rise no higher, by any means that nature
 affords. But as in the first Adam, all die
 without exception, who, by the ordinary
 course of generation, are connected with
 him as their head; so in the second Adam,
 the quickening Spirit, and Lord from hea-
 ven, all who, by regeneration, are united
 to him, and become members of that bo-
 dy whereof he is the head, are in like
 manner made alive; for "that which is
 born of the Spirit is," and must be,
 "spirit." Accordingly Christ is styled
the Prince of Life; not only the possessor
 of life, but the proprietor, and dispenser
 of it. To him it belongs to raise the dead,
 and

and to quicken whom he will. Hear his
own words, John v. 25, 26. "Verily
"truly I say unto you, The hour is co-
"ming, and now is, when the dead shall
"hear the voice of the Son of God: and
"they that hear, shall live. For as the
"Father hath life in himself; so hath he
"given to the Son to have life in him-
"self." And in this same epistle where
my text lies, Christ is expressly styled *our*
life; and the life of the believer is said to
be *hid*, or treasured up, *with Christ in God*:
Coloss. iii. 3, 4. "Ye are dead," saith the
apostle; dead to Adam, and the corrupted
perishing life you derived from him; dead
to a present world, and the things on
earth, which are no longer the objects of
your affection. Thus are ye dead; but
being raised with Christ to the things that
are above, to a new life, and manner of li-
ving, and "your life is hid with Christ in
"God: and when he who is our life shall
"appear, then shall ye also appear with
"him in glory." "born of the Spirit is,"
Here we are again led into a subject, to
which no language is adequate, but such
"unspeakable words" as Paul heard in
paradise,

paradise, "which it is not lawful for a
"man to utter."

Should I attempt to enlarge upon it,
I am afraid that I should only "darken
"counsel by words without knowledge."
What hath already been said upon that
fulness which dwelleth in Christ, may suffice
to convince you, that "his riches are un-
"searchable," and that nothing is want-
ing which sinners can either need, or wish
to possess. In him, as you have heard,
they have both righteousness and strength;
righteousness for the guilty, complete and
everlasting righteousness; for "by him
"all who believe are justified from all
"things:"—And strength for the weak,—
nay life for the dead; with this peculiar
advantage, that it is not left to their own
keeping, but still resides in him who is the
head of the body, and is imparted to them
as his members, by that Spirit which is
the indissoluble bond of their union; "for
"he that is joined to the Lord is one spi-
"rit." Accordingly he says, "Because I
"live, ye shall live also." And this was
the foundation of that parting promise to
his disciples, "I go to prepare a place for
"you; and if I go and prepare a place
"for

“ for you, I will come again and receive
 “ you unto myself, that where I am, there
 “ ye may be also.”——This would lead
 me to speak of that high perfection at
 which the life they at present receive from
 him shall arrive in the heavenly world,
 when the body itself, which, by an irre-
 verſible decree, is condemned to return to
 the duſt as it was, ſhall be raiſed again by
 the power and Spirit of the Redeemer, and
 fashioned like unto his own glorious body,
 in that day when he, who once ſuffered to
 bear their ſins, “ ſhall appear the ſecond
 “ time without ſin unto ſalvation.”

But I muſt not detain you any longer
 from the proper buſineſs of the day.

I have done what I could to render
 Chriſt precious to your ſouls: I have led
 you to view him in his eſſential dignity, as
 the creator of all things;—in his relation
 to believers, as the head of the body;—
 and as poſſeſſing all fulneſs in that import-
 ant character.

And here I would gladly expoſtulate
 with thoſe to whom theſe things of the
 Spirit I have been talking of, appear fool-
 iſhneſs, and in whom the god of this world
 hath ſo far blinded their minds, that they

see no beauty in this Saviour for which they should desire him. — O that the hour might now come, in which every dead soul in this assembly should "hear the voice of the Son of God, and live." May he who at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, while we speak in his name, shine into their hearts, to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, that in this glass, beholding the glory of the Lord, as the God of love, their darkness may be dispelled, their enmity subdued, and they be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by his all-conquering Spirit.

But my chief concern at present is with the living members of Christ: For you a table is once more covered in the wilderness, for strengthening you to proceed in your journey to the Canaan that is above. This is one of the channels which your living head hath appointed for conveying his life to the members of his body. The ordinance itself affords you the strongest ground of hope: it is a representation of that sacrifice which Christ offered upon the cross: and he who loved you so well

as to give his life for you, is certainly
 willing to impart life to you. If
 while ye were enemies, ye were recon-
 ciled to God by the death of his Son;
 "much more, being reconciled, you shall
 be saved by his life." Let not the sense
 of your unworthiness discourage you:
 You come not here to give, but to take
 what is given.—Nay, let me tell you, that
 the sense of your own emptiness is the very
 measure of your capacity for receiving his
 fulness. "He filleth the hungry with good
 things, but the rich, those who ac-
 count themselves rich, he sendeth empty
 away." Come therefore with longing
 desires, and enlarged hopes, to him
 who is full of grace and of truth, that out of
 his fulness you may this day receive grace
 for grace, to the glory of the giver, and to
 your own present and eternal joy.
 Amen.

S E R M O N V

2 CORINTHIANS; viii. 9.

*Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that though he was rich, yet for your sakes
he became poor, that ye through his poverty
might be rich.*

THese words contain an accurate description of the *grace*, or free favour, of our Lord Jesus Christ, which all true believers are here said to *know*: *i. e.* they have not only heard the report of this grace, assented to the truth of the report, and are able to give some account of it to others; but they *know* it *experimentally*, having tasted its sweetness, and felt the power of it in their own hearts.

Several particulars are mentioned by the apostle in proof and commendation of the *grace* he celebrates, which I propose to illustrate in the following discourse.

IN THE *first* in order is the state of the Redeemer

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deemer previous to his becoming poor. *He was rich*; but how rich, no language can express, nor any mind but his own conceive.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made, that was made;" John i. 1. 2. 3. It is expressly said of him, Coloss. i. 16. 17. that "by him all things were created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him, all things consist." The same representation is given of him by the Apostle to the Hebrews, who styles him "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; whom he hath appointed heir of all things; by whom also he made the worlds; and who upholdeth all things by the word of his power."

We esteem a man rich, who, besides what he has in order to the state of the Re-

what is necessary for the supply of his own wants, hath wherewithal to relieve the necessities of others: but how rich must he be, who hath no wants to be supplied, and is at the same time possessed of such infinite treasures, that they can never be exhausted, nor in the least degree diminished, by being imparted to others? Nay, besides whom nothing exists, but what derived its being from him, and is necessarily dependent upon him for all that it hath, or hopes to enjoy! Yet thus rich was he of whom the apostle speaks in my text.

II. The second thing to be considered, is the poverty to which he voluntarily submitted. The Apostle John having introduced the history of our Saviour with that lofty description of his original and essential glory which I formerly quoted, makes a sudden transition, verse 14, and informs us, *how* he who was rich, *became poor*, viz. by uniting himself to the human nature, and appearing in the likeness of sinful flesh. "The Word," says he, that same Word which in the beginning was with God, and was God, by whom all things were

were made; this "Word was made
 "flesh, and dwelt among us,"

Nothing can be more descriptive of the
 most abject poverty than the simple ac-
 count we have of his birth, Luke ii. at the
 beginning; where, after being told, that
 in consequence of a decree from the Ro-
 man Emperor, Joseph went up from Na-
 zareth unto Bethlehem, to be taxed, with
 Mary, his espoused wife, who was great
 with child, the sacred historian thus pro-
 ceeds, vers. 6. 7. "And so it was, that while
 "they were there, the days were accom-
 "plished that she should be delivered.
 "And she brought forth her first-born son,
 "and wrapped him in swaddling clothes,
 "and laid him in a manger, because there
 "was no room for them in the inn." Nor did his after life wear a different com-
 plexion from his birth: The same poverty,
 with respect to outward accommodation,
 which clouded his entrance into the world,
 accompanied him through every stage of
 his laborious journey, till at Calvary he
 finished his course upon the cross; inor-
 much that he could say, at the very time
 when his public ministry was most fre-
 quented and applauded, "The foxes have
 "holes,

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holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." But this was not the only, nor even the worst kind of poverty, to which he voluntarily submitted. "He made himself, that is, he consented to be made, of no reputation." For though multitudes occasionally admired and applauded him, yet these were generally persons in the lowest ranks of life. The rich, the learned, and the powerful, among the Jews, were flatly combined to distress him on every side. They practised every art to defame his character, and to render both his person and his ministry the objects of popular contempt and hatred; till at length they were permitted to prevail so far, as to get him condemned by a sentence of the supreme court of their own nation, and then adjudged by the Roman governor to the death of a slave; which was executed with every circumstance of indignity and torture that the most inventive malice and cruelty could devise. — Thus poor did our Lord become; not by constraint, or the hand of violence, for that was impossible; but of his own free choice; as it is written,

Philip,

Philip. ii. 6, 7, 8. "He who was in the
 "form of God, and thought it not rob-
 "bery to be equal with God, *made him-*
 "*self* of no reputation, and took upon
 "him the form of a servant, and was
 "made in the likeness of men : And being
 "found in fashion as a man, *he humbled*
 "*himself*, and became obedient unto
 "death, even the death of the cross."

III. BUT for whose sake did he thus be-
 come poor?—This is the *third* particular
 mentioned in the text; which manifests
 and commends the riches of his grace.—
 It was for *us*, the children of men, crea-
 tures but of yesterday, whose foundation
 is in the dust. We are indeed poor in e-
 very sense of the expression. Our life is
 the gift of another, and wholly dependent
 upon his sovereign pleasure. All the mate-
 rials for supporting it lie without our-
 selves; we must go abroad in quest of
 them; and the same hand that provides
 them, can either withdraw them, or put
 them beyond our reach, or with-hold that
 blessing which alone can render them ef-
 fectual for the sustenance of that preca-
 rious life we possess: "If he hideth his
 "face,

"face, we are troubled; if he break through
 "his mouth, we die." As a blind
 "Thus poor we all are, and necessarily
 must be, as scriptures do but when I add;
 that we are sinners, poverty is too feeble
 a word to convey the faintest idea of our
 forlorn condition. A person may be poor,
 and yet owe nothing to any man but sin
 is not merely want; it is positive debt.
 Again, a man who is both poor and in
 debt, may be healthy and strong; if he
 by diligence and hard labour, he may not
 only procure the necessities of life, but even
 be able in time to do justice to his credi-
 tors: but sin is disease as well as debt; it
 is the sickness of the soul, which wastes its
 strength, and renders it incapable of do-
 ing, nay, disinclined to attempt any
 thing, for the recovery of its health and
 vigour. Once more, the most insolvent
 debtor may by flight get beyond the reach
 of his creditor: but to what place can a
 sinner flee, where God is not present,
 whose essential goodness is the irreconcil-
 able enemy of sin, and only clothes itself
 with justice to condemn and punish it.
 In short, our Lord's description of the La-
 odiceans, "wretched, miserable, poor,"

He blind, and naked, is the picture of every child of Adam in his natural state, with the same fatal inscription written over his head, "He knoweth it not." And did he who was rich;—he whom we had offended;—he who stood in no need of us;—he who passed by creatures of a superior order, leaving them to inherit the misery they had chosen, and in our punishment, as well as in theirs, might have displayed and glorified the perfection of his own nature;—did he, I say, for *our sakes become poor?* How astonishing this grace!—how impossible to be credited, if he himself had not declared it!

IV. Let us now inquire, in the *fourth* place, for what end was it that he did this?

It would justly have been deemed an act of uncommon generosity, had he simply discharged the debt we were unable to pay, that being relieved of that burden, we might be at liberty to earn a scanty subsistence by our future labour and industry. It would have been a higher act of generosity, to raise us at once above poverty, and the fear of want, by supplying us from his

own stores with the necessities of life, "feeding us," as Agur expressed his wish, "with food convenient for us." But the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ proposed an end still higher than this: *He became poor,* saith the Apostle, "that we might be rich;" that is, possessed of every thing that could render us completely happy. Here it is that grace shines forth in its sweetest and most transcendent glory. But how shall we describe what "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive?" The best assistance I can give you, is to select from scripture a few of those passages that speak of the riches which Christ doth at present confer upon his people; and then leave your own minds to imagine, how immense their final portion must be, when Christ shall come again to complete their salvation.

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; for by him all who believe are justified from all things." — With pardon, which is the introductory blessing of the covenant, "peace with God" is inseparably connected;

ed; for "being justified by faith, we have
 "peace with God through our Lord Jesus
 "Christ." In consequence whereof, be-
 lievers are received into the house and fa-
 mily of God; not as servants, but as chil-
 dren; for "to as many as receive Christ,
 "to them gives he power to become the
 "sons of God, even to them that believe
 "in his name." "Behold," said the A-
 postle John, "what manner of love the
 "Father hath bestowed upon us, that we
 "should be called the sons of God." Nor
 is this a mere title of honour: believers
 have not only the name, but the nature
 of children. Accordingly they are said,
 by another apostle, to be "partakers of
 "the divine nature." Christ dwells in
 them by his Spirit, in such a manner, that
 it is not so much *they* that live, as it is
 "*Christ* that liveth in them." Once more,
 as they have the name and nature of chil-
 dren, so likewise the portion that is con-
 nected with that relation; for, as Paul
 reasons, Rom. viii. 17. "If children, then
 "heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs
 "with Christ." And what is their por-
 tion? It is styled *eternal life*; "a treasure
 O 2

"his the heavens that faileth not," nor
 "kingdom that cannot be moved," and
 "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled,"
 "that fadeth not away."

These few quotations, which will be familiar to the ears of all who are conversant with the holy scriptures, may serve to give us some notion of the riches which Christ doth impart to his people. I shall therefore conclude this head with two noted passages recorded in the preceding epistle to the Corinthians, which describe the provision that is made for believers in Christ, in terms more expressive than many volumes would suffice fully to unfold. The one is chap. i. 30. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." The other is chap. iii. 21. *et seq.* "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

V. The fifth and last thing in the text that remains to be illustrated, is the con-

nection

nection betwixt the poverty of Christ and the riches of his people, or the influence that the one hath upon the other. "He became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich."

This connection will appear, if we consider that his voluntary *humiliation*, in taking upon him our low nature, fulfilling all righteousness, and giving himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God, hath magnified the law, which we had broken; and given such full satisfaction to the justice of the lawgiver, that a way is now opened for this free and honourable exercise of mercy to the most guilty and polluted of the posterity of Adam. Hereby his sin was condemned in the *flesh*; and this, in the same nature that had offended: And God, by offering forth his own Son, to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, doth now manifest his righteousness, no less than his mercy, in the forgiveness of sin; and appears to all his intelligent creatures to be infinitely *just*, as well as infinitely *gracious*, when he justifies those that believe in Jesus. The Son of God "was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities."

"He

"He bore our sins in his own body upon
 "the cross." So that "now there is no
 "condemnation to them that are in Christ
 "Jesus;" for, as the apostle reasons,
 Rom. viii. 33. 34. "Who shall lay anything
 "to the charge of God's elect? It is God
 "that justifieth. Who is he that con-
 "demneth? It is Christ that died, yea
 "rather that is risen again, who is even
 "at the right hand of God, who also ma-
 "keth intercession for us."

And as the death or sacrifice of Christ,
 absolves all that believe on him from
 guilt of sin, which, as I formerly ob-
 served, is the fundamental and introduc-
 tory blessing of the covenant; so his
exaltation, which is the reward of his
poverty, or voluntary humiliation, qua-
 lifies him to confer upon them all those
 consequent blessings which enrich them in
 time, and shall complete their happiness
 in the eternal world. Thus it is written,
 Philip. ii. 8. &c. that because "Christ
 "humbled himself, and became obedient
 "unto death, even the death of the cross;"
 therefore "God also hath highly exalted
 "him, and given him a name which is
 "above every name: that at the name of
 "King" "Jesus"

"Jesus every knee should bow, of things
 "in heaven, and things in earth, and
 "things under the earth; and that every
 "tongue should confess that Jesus Christ
 "is Lord, to the glory of God the Fa-
 "ther." And to the same purpose we
 read, Eph. i. 21. *et seqq.* that "when God
 "raised him from the dead, he set him at
 "his own right hand in the heavenly pla-
 "ces, far above all principality, and
 "power, and might, and dominion, and
 "every name that is named, not only in
 "this world, but also in that which is to
 "come; and put all things under his feet,
 "and gave him to be the head over all
 "things to the church, which is his Bo-
 "dy, the fulness of him that filleth all in
 "all." When Christ ascended up on
 high, leading captivity captive; he then
 received gifts for men, even for the rebel-
 lions, that the Lord God might dwell a-
 mong them. And now all power is com-
 mitted to him, both in heaven and on
 earth. He not only appears in the pre-
 sence of God as our great high priestly to
 plead the merit of his sacrifice, and to
 bless his people; but he sits at the Father's
 right hand, enthroned in glory, as the
 "King

“King whom God hath set upon his holy hill of Zion;” from whence he sends forth his angels as “ministering spirits,” to minister unto the heirs of promise during their continuance in this house of their pilgrimage, till they arrive at his Father’s house in heaven, where they shall be advanced to sit with him upon his throne, and possess fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

AND now, my dear brethren, in the review of these five particulars, to which the apostle directs our attention in proof and commendation of the *grace* which he celebrates, what improvement doth it become us to make of the subject?

Doth not *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ* call for our humble and thankful *admiration*? The original and essential *riches* of the Redeemer,—the *poverty* to which he voluntarily submitted, —the character of those *for whose sake* he became poor,—the *riches* he imparts unto them,—and the *means* by which he doth it,—are all so wonderful when separately considered, and kindle such a blaze of glory when combined and brought together; that

angels themselves are dazzled with its
 splendour; and, through "all eternity," will
 contemplate, with increasing wonder and
 delight, what neither they, nor we, shall
 ever be able fully to comprehend. *g*
 You must further be sensible, that this
 grace of our Lord Jesus Christ doth likewise
 invite, and should even constrain, our i-
 mitation. It was for this purpose that the
 apostle introduced it into the subject with
 which my text is immediately connected.
 He is recommending love to the brethren,
 and in particular that instance of charity
 which consisteth in supplying the wants
 of the poor; and the argument or motive
 with which he preface his exhortation, is
 the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who,
 though he was rich, yet for their sake became
 poor, that they through his poverty might be
 rich. And here, did your time permit, I
 might take occasion to show, that the gos-
 pel of Christ is so far from relaxing the
 obligations of those who receive it, to the
 practice of social duties; that, on the con-
 trary, it strengthens these obligations, and
 carries the duties themselves to a sublimer
 height of perfection, than the most refined
 morality ever thought of, or perhaps
 elg. II. P would

would chuse to adopt for the measure of his own conduct. I need only quote one passage of scripture in proof of what I have said, where love to the brethren appears plainly to be raised by gospel-grace even above the standard of the original law itself. The *law* saith, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" But what saith the *gospel*? You may read it, in John iii. 16. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." To which it is immediately added, as a practical inference, "We *ought*." The expression is emphatical, and imports, that it is not left to our choice, but is strictly due as a debt, "We *ought* to lay down our *lives* for the brethren." Such is the love that the gospel recommends. From whence it appears, that the purest and most sublime morality flows from faith in Christ as its native source, and will rise in exact proportion to the knowledge of his grace.

But do we *know* the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? — This question demands a serious and deliberate answer.

It is too evident, that many who bear the title of Christians are grossly ignorant even

even of the doctrines of grace, and need to be taught "the first principles of the oracles of God." But besides these, we have just cause to fear, that not a few are to be found among us, who, though they have acquired a theory of Christian doctrine, and can talk of the great truths of the gospel with propriety and fluency; yet they cannot be said to know that grace whereof they are able to discourse to others. The knowledge which the apostle speaks of, is different from that which may be acquired by study, or mere human instruction. It is of a kind altogether peculiar to the real saint: it is produced by the Spirit accompanying the word, taking of the things of Christ, and not only shewing them unto him, but writing them upon the "fleshy tables of his heart," and thereby transforming him into the divine image.—Let me then ask you, or rather let me intreat you to ask your own hearts, as in the presence of God, Whether or not you ever were convinced of your need of this grace, your absolute need of it to save you from the wrath to come?—Did you ever see yourselves by the light of God's

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word, to be wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; under a righteous sentence of condemnation, and unable, as of yourselves, to do any thing that could be effectual for your own recovery!—Under this conviction of your lost and helpless estate by nature, were your eyes opened to see the necessity and sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ; the perfection of that sacrifice which he offered up to the Father; together with his ability and willingness “to save to the uttermost” all that come unto God by him? Animated by these spiritual discoveries of the Saviour, encouraged by his kind invitation to come to him, and constrained by the Father’s command to believe on his name, did you humbly and thankfully receive him as the “unspeakable gift” of God to men; saying with the Apostle Paul, “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. And do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but
“that

that which is by the faith of Christ, "the righteousness which is of God by faith?"—Was this acceptance entire and unreserved; did your heart consent that he should be made of God unto you, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; your prophet to instruct you, and your king to rule over you, as well as your priest to justify you by his blood?—Have you relished, or do you now relish, the sweetness of his grace?—Above all, let me ask you, have you felt its power and influence upon your temper and practice? The grace of the gospel is not only the parent of peace and joy, but an effectual principle of holiness in all who partake of it. This was the doctrine which Paul delivered to Titus, Tit. ii. 11. *et seqq.* "The grace of God which bringeth salvation, teacheth us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world." This is not only the most satisfying evidence, that we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; but so essential an evidence, that where it is wanting, I can read of nothing, in the whole book of God, to supply the defect, or that
can

can be substituted in the place of it: "I read of a *dead* faith, — a *presumptuous* hope, — a *false* peace, — and a *name* to live; but all these are refuges of lies, which ere long shall be "swept" away "with the besom" of destruction. Whereas the true faith of the gospel is every where represented, as "working by love," and "overcoming" "the world." — The hope of the gospel incites all who are possessed of it, "to purify themselves, even as he" whom they hope to enjoy "is pure." — "The peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeps," or guards, "the heart and mind," and fortifies the believer against the fierce assaults of his spiritual enemies. And it is the distinguishing privilege of those who "are not under the law, but under grace;" that "sin shall not have dominion over them." "They have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." They shew, that they live in the Spirit, by walking in the Spirit; and give proof that they are "risen with Christ," and "know him in the power of his resurrection;" by "seeking

I seeking those things which are above,
 where Christ sitteth at the right hand of
 God. These are the words of truth:
 they are pure words, like silver tried in a
 furnace of earth, and purified seven times.
 And they are written in such capital letters,
 and expressed with such plainness and pre-
 cision, that no sophistry can either darken
 their meaning, or impair their force; un-
 less it be to those unstable souls who are
 ever learning, but never able to come
 to the knowledge of the truth; who
 like children are tossed to and fro, and
 carried about with every wind of doc-
 trine by the flight of men, and cunning
 craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to
 deceive. I therefore repeat upon this
 occasion, what I have often inculcated,
 and the scriptures of truth uniformly
 teach, that the gospel-salvation is a *present*
 salvation; and that the Lord Jesus Christ
 is not only a deliverer from wrath to
 come, but that, in the mean time, he
 saves all who trust in him, from that sin
 which renders them obnoxious to wrath;
 first, by expiating the guilt of it by his
 death; and next, by breaking the power
 of it in their hearts, through the opera-
 tion

tion of that Spirit which is the seal of their adoption, the earnest, and first fruits, of whatever pretensions they may make to their future inheritance.

These are the particulars upon which I would have you to examine yourselves impartially, as those who expect a judgement to come. Some of them are so essential to the character of a Christian, that every one who truly believeth in Christ, must have a consciousness of them, in his own mind: for none was ever born into the family of God, without such a conviction of guilt, pollution, and weakness, as rendered the Redeemer both necessary and precious in his esteem. And though the enlightened mind will discover much imperfection, and many humbling blemishes, even in the fairest of those fruits which are the product of true and saving faith; yet (unless it be in those who are but newly entered into the school of Christ) the effects of his teaching must in some degree appear in such gracious fruits as I just now mentioned. And I should betray the trust committed to me, and reproach that grace I profess to magnify; if I encouraged any to conclude, that they are satisfyingly acquainted with it, whose temper-

and practice have undergone no change, whatever pretensions they may make to faith in the Redeemer, and confident assurance of their final salvation: for all the saved of the Lord are expressly denominated "*God's workmanship*," created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them." And it will remain an invariable truth, to the confusion of all vain boasting hypocrites, that "whom God did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren."

But my chief business at present is with those who *know*, by experience, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; having both tasted its sweetness, and felt the power of it in their own hearts. To such I shall address a few short exhortations, and then proceed to the service for which we are assembled.

Ist, Give glory to God for what you *know* of his grace; and humbly acknowledge, that it was he, and he only, who opened your eyes, and turned you from darkness to light.—Who made you to differ from others?—The proper answer to

this question is to be found in the 4th chapter of this epistle, verse 6. "God, who at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ." Not unto yourselves then, not unto yourselves, but to his free distinguishing favour is all this glory due.

2dly, Let this morning-dawn encourage you to hope for the perfect day. Christ would never have emptied himself, and become poor, without the most absolute assurance, that some were to be enriched by him: and where he begins a good work, this may, and ought to be, considered as a certain pledge, that he will carry it forward to its full perfection; for he who is "the author," is also "the finisher" of his people's faith. Rejoice, therefore, in hope of the glory of God. — And till you are brought to the possession of it, be careful, in the

3d place, To use all the means he hath appointed for obtaining larger measures of his grace, both in respect of knowledge and of influence. Among these means, the

holy

holy sacrament of our Lord's supper holds the most distinguished rank, as it was instituted for this very purpose, to exhibit a sensible representation of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in becoming poor for our sake, that we through his poverty might be rich. Here we not only behold him in his lowest state of voluntary humiliation, evidently set forth as crucified before our eyes; but likewise presenting to us, and by visible symbols conferring upon us, all those unsearchable riches which he purchased with his blood, and secures by his intercession; which he actually possesseth as the "head of the church, which is his body;" and conveys, by his Spirit, to every member in due season, and measure, as their several necessities and circumstances require. Let us then approach the table of the Lord with faith, and love, and thankful praise; and while we bless him for the grace he hath already made known to us, let us pray for such further discoveries as may strengthen and comfort us in what remains of our journey through this wilderness, till we arrive at those blessed abodes of perfect light, and love, and purity.

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rity, where we shall see him as he is, without the intervention of ordinances; and enjoy him fully, without interruption, and without end. Amen.

I PETER, I. 20. 21.

Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.

SER-

Every fabrick must partake of the strength or weakness of its foundation. A house that is built upon the loose sand, will soon fall to the ground, nay, the higher it is raised, especially if the materials be weighty, the more sudden and ruinous will its fall be. It must therefore be of the last importance to the Christian, to be fully satisfied in his own mind, that the grounds of his faith and hope in God are sufficient to sustain all the weight he hath to lay upon them.

The life of the soul is no trivial matter: it is our all. Other things may be wanted;

city, where we shall see him as he is, without the intervention of ordinances; and enjoy him fully, without interruption.

S E R M O N VII

I PETER, i. 20. 21.

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The *life* of the soul is no trivial matter: it is our ALL. Other things may be wanted;

ed; but this is the "one thing needful." The death of the soul, by which I mean its final separation from the only source of life and joy, is misery in the extreme; pure misery, without mixture or alloy.

To this death we all became liable by our apostasy from God. The loathsome disease, which, if left to its own operation, will soon produce this fatal effect, is deep lodged in our nature; and we are directed to look to the Lord Jesus Christ, not only for the cure of the disease, but likewise for all that exalted happiness besides, which, commencing in present reconciliation with God, and the renovation of the soul after his divine image, shall at length be perfected in the entire resemblance, and full enjoyment, of him, in the heavenly state.

That the Lord Jesus is able to do these great things for us, is the professed belief of all who style themselves Christians.

The dignity of his person, as the "eternal Word made flesh;" the perfection of his obedience; the merit of his sacrifice; his resurrection from the dead; and his exaltation to the right hand of God, leave no room to doubt of his saving power; while his own account of the ar-

and

rand upon which he came into the world;
 his free unconstrained choice of the office
 of Redeemer; his generous offers of mer-
 cy to the chief of sinners; together with
 the regret he always expressed when these
 offers were rejected; may justly lead us to
 conclude, that he is no less *willing* than
 "he is able, to save to the uttermost all
 "that come unto God by him."

These encouraging truths, which are
 written as with a sun-beam in the sacred
 scriptures, present themselves to the view
 of every intelligent reader. Hence those
 general professions of gratitude to the Re-
 deemer, and of dependence upon him, for
 the pardon of sin, and deliverance from
 wrath, which are so common among Chri-
 stians of almost every denomination.

But I have had frequent occasion to ob-
 serve, that these views of the Saviour,
 though just in themselves, are too often
 blended with indistinct, and even erro-
 neous conceptions, of the great scheme of
 salvation, as revealed in the gospel. Ma-
 ny, while they look upon the Son as the ge-
 nerous friend of fallen man, are too apt
 to represent the Father to their own minds
 as severe and unrelenting; eager to punish

his

his guilty creatures; yielding with reluctance to accept the offered ransom, and to receive from a Mediator, that satisfaction to his justice, which was necessary to make way for such exercise of mercy as might consist with the authority of his laws, and the dignity of his government.

Sentiments of this kind are not only gloomy and uncomfortable to those who entertain them; but have likewise a most pernicious tendency in other respects. They thwart the very design of Christ's coming into the world; of whom it is expressly said, that "he suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." It was not that our regards should terminate in his own person as Mediator; but that through him they should ascend to the eternal Father, who so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, but have everlasting life." He came to demonstrate the love of God to sinners of mankind; that by rendering the Father amiable to the convinced, enlightened soul, he might overpower its natural enmity; and upon the ruins thereof, erect a throne for gratitude

and love. Christ is indeed said to be "the
 "end of the law." And the law, by shew-
 ing us our guilt and depravity, and the
 necessity of a better righteousness than our
 own, to be pleaded as the ground of our
 acceptance with God, is very properly
 styled "our *schoolmaster* to bring us to
 Christ." But when we are brought thus
 far by the discipline of the law, doth
 Christ then command us to stop short at
 himself, and to proceed no farther? No.
 He who is "the end of the law" is styled
 the way to the Father: for thus he de-
 scribes his own character and office,
 John xiv. 6. "I am the way, and the
 truth, and the life: no man cometh
 unto the Father but by me." It is
 God in Christ reconciling the world unto
 himself, by the ministry of the Spirit,
 that is the complete and adequate object
 of faith: and we do not understand "the
 word of reconciliation" till we see the
 undivided godhead, Father, Son, and Holy
 Ghost, united in counsel, as they are one
 in essence; and each performing, in the
 character he sustains, a peculiar work of
 grace for the eternal salvation of an elect
 world.

It is the agency of the *Father*, in this wonderful plan which "angels desire to look into," that the passage I have been reading leads us at present to contemplate. And it will readily occur to you, that four several acts of grace are here attributed to him.

First, He ordained his Son to the office of Redeemer.

Secondly, He manifested him to the world at the appointed season.

Thirdly, He raised him up from the dead.

And,

Fourthly, He gave him glory.

Each of these particulars I shall endeavour to illustrate; and then shew their joint tendency to establish our faith and hope in God.

First, It was the Father who ordained Christ to the office of Redeemer. You need only read from the 17th verse, to be satisfied, that this was the doctrine the apostle meant to deliver: "If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were

“were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold;—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,” *who verily was foreordained, namely, by the Father, sustaining the character of supreme Lord and judge, before the foundation of the world.*

“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning.” The scheme of redemption, and the several steps preparatory to its final execution, were fixed and adjusted before time commenced. This in part appears from the manner of its first publication in paradise, as Moses hath recorded it in the sacred history. The cool majestic solemnity with which the whole procedure was conducted on that important occasion, and especially the putting the gracious promise of a deliverer, to our guilty parents, into the form of a judicial sentence against the grand apostate who had seduced them, plainly shewed, that the constitution which then commenced, was not an after thought, or newly devised expedient, but that all was the result of previous counsel and design, that the rebellion had been foreseen before it was acted.

acted, and redemption decreed before the forfeiture was incurred.

Many passages might be quoted from the Old Testament writings, where the Father's choice and ordination of the Saviour are declared in the strongest and most explicit terms. In one place he is introduced, proclaiming his sovereign pleasure in these words: "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." In another place, where Messiah himself is the speaker, the Father's commission is thus acknowledged by him: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." And this last quotation is more remarkable, because the Evangelist Luke informs us, that our Lord, after reading it publicly in the synagogue at Nazareth, directly applied it to himself, by adding these

these words, "This day is this scripture
"fulfilled in your ears," Luke iv. 21.

But there are other declarations of our
blessed Redeemer, which, without any cir-
cuit, express the same truth, in terms so
plain, that it is impossible for any body to
mistake their meaning. "I proceeded
"forth," said he, "and came from God;
"neither came I of myself, but he sent
"me"—"I do nothing of myself, but
"as the Father hath taught me I speak
"these things, and he that sent me is with
"me."—"I came from heaven to do the
"will of him that sent me."—"I have
"not spoken of myself, but the Father
"which sent me, he gave me a command-
"ment what I should say, and what I
"should speak." Such explicit acknow-
ledgements from the mouth of "the
"faithful witness," which must be fami-
liar to the ears of all who are conversant
with the lively oracles of truth, are suffi-
cient to illustrate the agency of the Father
in framing the plan of man's redemption
before time commenced, and in *ordaining*
the Son to carry it into execution.

Secondly, His agency is no less conspi-
cuous

uous in *manifesting* the Saviour at the appointed season.

It was the original promise, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." Accordingly we read, Gal. iv. 4. that "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, *made of a woman*:" The propriety of which expression cannot fail to strike us with peculiar force, when we recollect what the angel said to Mary, after he had informed her of the high honour which God was about to confer upon her, Luke i. 35. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."

All the predictions of the prophets concerning the time and place of the Messiah's birth, and the circumstances of the Jewish nation at that important period, were most exactly fulfilled, as might easily be shown."

A special messenger was sent to prepare the world for his reception: This was John the Baptist, (who had likewise been foretold in ancient prophecy), to whom the Father *manifested* the promised seed, by a

visible

visible descent of the Holy Ghost at his baptism, accompanied with a voice from heaven, which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Which signal and most authentic attestation was immediately published by John to the men of that age; for this was the record he bare, John i. 32. 33. 34. "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and I bare record, that this is the Son of God."

- But he had greater witness than that of John. The works which his Father gave him to finish, the same works that he did, bare witness of him, that the Father had sent him. It was to this divine attestation that our Lord himself most frequently appealed. When the Jews came to him in Solomon's porch at the feast of dedication, and said unto him, "How long dost thou make us to doubt?"

"if

“if thou be the Christ tell us plainly,” his answer was, “I told you, and ye believed not: The works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me.” — “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not: but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.”

The miraculous appearances at his death had such an effect upon the centurion, and the soldiers who attended his crucifixion, that “when they saw the earthquake, and those things that were done,” and in particular observed with what majesty he retired from life, voluntarily dismissing his Spirit, after he had cried with a shout of triumph, *It is finished*, “they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.”

By these, and sundry other ways that might be mentioned, did the Father manifest and give testimony to the Saviour.

III. But it was chiefly by his *resurrection from the dead*, that our Lord was declared to be the Son of God with power.” — And this is the *third* particular

ticular mentioned in the text; which, you see, is expressly attributed to the agency of the Father. It was *God*, saith the apostle, *that raised him up from the dead*. — This doth not imply, that our great Redeemer could not, or did not, by his own proper virtue, rise from the dead: for what he said to the Jews was strictly true in the most obvious sense of the words, “*I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again*,” and on another occasion, “*Destroy this temple,*” pointing at his own body, “*and in three days I will raise it up.*” Accordingly, the author of this epistle observes, ch. iii. 18. that he was “*quickened by the Spirit*,” or that divine nature which was personally united to his humanity. And in his memorable sermon on the day of Pentecost, speaking of the resurrection of Christ, after he had said, Acts ii. 24. that the Father “*loosed the pains of death*,” he immediately added, “*because it was not possible he should be holden of it.*”

Nevertheless, as Christ sustained a public character and died as the surety of fallen man, it was highly fit in itself, and necessary for our comfort, that the agency of

the Father should be clearly seen and acknowledged in his resurrection; and that his release from the grave should appear to be an act of righteous administration, rather than the mere exercise of sovereign power. It was certainly most regular, that the same hand from which he received his commission, should seal his discharge; for none else but the Father was qualified to judge, whether or not the articles of agreement were fulfilled: He, and he alone, had authority to declare, that the satisfaction was valid, and the debt paid to the uttermost farthing. This, I apprehend, was the reason why an angel was sent from heaven to roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre. It was not surely to open a passage for our Lord, as though any stone, how great soever, could have confined his revived body to the grave; for we read, John xx. 19. that "on the same day at evening, when *the doors were shut*, where the disciples " were assembled for fear of the Jews, " Jesus came and stood in the midst of " them." But what our Lord said to the people (John xii. 30.) concerning the voice which came from heaven, in answer to that

that prayer, "Father, glorify thy name," *This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes,*—may justly be applied to that appearance of the angel. It was not *because of Christ*, as though he needed his aid, but *for the sake* of the pious women who had come to visit the sepulchre; and I may add, for the sake of all whom their report shall reach, to make it evident, that his discharge was issued in due form, in testimony of the Father's infinite delight in him, and of his perfect satisfaction with his whole conduct as Mediator.—This leads to the

Fourth and last particular; upon which it is as impossible to say enough, as it is unnecessary to say much; namely, *the glory he received* from the Father as the promised and merited reward of his obedience and sufferings.

Of this we have many lofty descriptions in scripture. There we are told, that "God who raised him from the dead," "hath set him at his own right hand in" "the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and" "dominion, and every name that is na-

" med, not only in this world, but also
 " in that which is to come : and hath put
 " all things under his feet, and given him
 " to be the head over all things to the
 " church."—" He is gone," saith our
 apostle, in the 3d chapter of this epistle,
 at the 22d verse,— " He is gone into hea-
 " ven, and is on the right hand of God,
 " angels, and authorities, and powers,
 " being made subject unto him." He is
 constituted the final judge of men ; for
 " God hath appointed the day in which
 " he will judge the world in righteous-
 " ness by that man whom he hath ordain-
 " ed ; whereof he hath given assurance
 " unto all men, in that he raised him
 " from the dead."—" Then shall the
 " Lord Jesus be revealed from heaven,
 " with his mighty angels, in flaming fire,
 " taking vengeance on them that know
 " not God, and that obey not the gospel
 " of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be
 " punished with everlasting destruction
 " from the presence of the Lord, and from
 " the glory of his power ; when he shall
 " come to be glorified in his saints, and
 " to be admired in all them that believe."
 The donation of this glory by his heaven-
 ly

ly Father, and its connection with his previous sufferings and death, are solemnly acknowledged by our Lord himself, in that prayer which he uttered in the hearing of his disciples, John xvii. 4. 5. "I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." And both are expressly asserted in the same connection, Philip. ii. 6.—11. where the apostle first relates the several steps of our Lord's humiliation, and then adds, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Thus have I endeavoured to give you a short illustration of the agency of the *Father* in the work of man's redemption, as it is described in this passage. He *ordained* the Saviour;—he *manifested* him to the world;

world;—he *raised him up from the dead*;—he *gave him glory*.—And all those particulars are made known to us. For what end? *That our faith and hope may be in God*. Amazing goodness! What shall we say to this?—"Lord, we believe, help thou our unbelief."

Can we entertain hard thoughts of that God, who hath not only done such great things for our recovery, but done them in a manner so demonstrative of his love, that it is impossible for the jealousy of guilt itself to find out any seeming defect in the encouragement they afford, or to devise any additional security for dispelling the fears, and assuring the hopes, of the chief of sinners; who, conscious of deserved wrath, and confessing the justice of the sentence that condemns them, flee for refuge to that sanctuary erected by infinite wisdom and love, for the reception of those who look for protection no where else? Unbelief, when viewed in the glass of my text, changeth its aspect; and instead of *timid distrust*, plainly appears to be *daring presumption*. We give God the *lie*, when we put away from ourselves the calls of his mercy, and the offers of his grace:

Whereas,

Whereas, by a humble and thankful acceptance of the Saviour, "we set to our seal that God is true;" and only render unto him the glory that is due to his name, as the God of love, the God who is love, even the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom he reconciles the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

A copious enlargement upon this branch of my subject, would carry me far beyond the ordinary limits of a discourse: but as it is the will of God, that the heirs of promise should have "a strong consolation," I cannot conclude my remarks upon the agency of the Father in the work of man's redemption, without reminding you of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich."—"He who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient
unto

“unto death, even the death of the cross.” The Father indeed freely gave the Son *to us*; but with equal freedom the Son gave himself *for us*. With what alacrity did he accept the office of Mediator? “Lo I come,—I delight to do thy will: thy law is within my heart.” With what ardour did he execute the commission he had received? “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!”—“I,” said he, “am the good shepherd; the good shepherd *giveth* his life for the sheep.” It is not violently taken from me; I voluntarily lay it down. Nay, he was not only a willing sacrifice, like Isaac, consenting to be bound, and laid upon the altar; but he himself was the priest that offered the sacrifice: for thus it is written in the epistle to the Hebrews, chap. ix. 14. “Through the eternal Spirit, he offered himself without spot unto God.”

Here then is sunshine without a cloud. Around the throne of God, and of the Lamb, all is bright meridian splendor. What pity is it that any gloom should sit upon our minds?—“*In this was ma-*

“ *manifested the love of God towards us, be-*
 “ *cause that God sent his only begot-*
 “ *ten Son into the world, that we might*
 “ *live through him,*” 1 John iv. 9. —
The love of Christ was no less clearly mani-
fested, in his “ GIVING himself for us an
 “ offering and a sacrifice to God, for a
 “ sweet-smelling favour.” Eph. v. 2.

These two memorable and interesting sentences, like the cherubims which covered the mercy-seat, have their faces looking one towards another; and both smile with complacency upon every returning prodigal. For to connect them together, and bring them home to ourselves, I need only direct your attention to a third passage of scripture, where faith in the Son is expressly enjoined as an act of obedience to the will of the Father: 1 John iii. 23. “ This is the *command* of God, “ that we should believe on the name of “ his Son Jesus Christ.” — Let us this day unite them all in our serious meditations at the table of the Lord; and improve them, as we ought to do, for the establishment of our *faith*, and *hope*, and *joy*. We are not straitened in God: let us not

be straitened in our own bowels; for this is the call which he addresseth to each believer in particular, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Amen.

WHY do not all to whom these good tidings are published, receive them with humble gratitude and joy? Are they expressed in terms so dark and ambiguous, that their meaning and import cannot be fully ascertained? or is the offer of life loaded with such hard conditions, as exceed the powers of those to whom it is addressed? Were either of these the case, unbelief would be furnished with something more than a plausible excuse. But every body must be sensible, that neither of these objections can, with any colour of justice, be charged upon the record as it lies before us in my text. To what then shall we attribute the cold reception it meets with from the bulk of mankind; the contemptuous rejection of it by many;

T 2

S E R M O N VII.

i JOHN, v. 11.

*This is the record, that God hath given to us
eternal life : and this life is in his Son.*

W H Y do not all to whom these good tidings are published, receive them with humble gratitude and joy? Are they expressed in terms so dark and ambiguous, that their meaning and import cannot be fully ascertained? or is the offer of *life* loaded with such hard conditions, as exceed the powers of those to whom it is addressed? Were either of these the case, unbelief would be furnished with something more than a *plausible* excuse. But every body must be sensible, that neither of these objections can, with any colour of justice, be charged upon the *record* as it lies before us in my text. To what then shall we attribute the cold reception it meets with from the bulk of mankind; the contemptuous rejection of it by many;

and the violent opposition that is made to it by not a few?

I shall not pretend to enumerate all the different causes that might be assigned. There is *one* which, however it may appear a paradox to some, doth, in my opinion, unfold the most dangerous and fruitful source of infidelity. It is briefly this, — The gospel-record is *too plain* to be understood; and *too gracious* to be believed.

Here is nothing above the level of the lowest capacity; nothing beyond the reach of the most degenerate among men. It requires no acuteness to discover what is meant by a *gift*; and if the gift be free and disincumbered, all to whom it is offered are equally qualified to receive it. This pulls up at once the deepest-laid foundations of pride and vain-glory, and thwarts that love of distinction and pre-eminence which, from the date of the apostasy, hath been the fatal inheritance of the human kind. We cannot bear the thought of being fed at a common table, how richly soever that table may be furnished. Each of us would wish to have a portion peculiar to himself; something that might denote a preference to others,

and

and flatter that partial opinion which every one fondly cherisheth of his own personal importance.

Hence it is, that the record of God hath either been altogether rejected, or so interlined with the glosses of vain philosophy, as to alter its very frame, and render it not only ineffectual, but even adverse to those salutary purposes for which it was intended.

The Almighty Independent Sovereign of the Universe hath been tried at the bar of his own rebellious subjects. There it hath been decided what is fit and becoming the high station he holds. Plans of administration have been laid down for him, formed upon those systems of human government, which to each daring projector appeared the most complete: whereas the absurdity, as well as the arrogance, of all such attempts, are detected and re-proved by two very plain questions, which the Apostle Paul proposes in the 11th chapter of his epistle to the Romans at the close; "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?"

“again?” — No man of common understanding will hesitate a moment in giving an answer to these questions, but will readily reply, — None hath been his counsellor, neither is there any who hath first given to God; “for,” as it immediately follows, “of him, and through him, and “to him, are all things” And yet how obvious, and how important, are the consequences of such acknowledgements?

For if none hath been his counsellor, it is plain, that none can know his mind, till he shall be pleased to reveal it; nor even then can it be known any further than it is revealed. To supply what is concealed, with conclusions drawn from the reasonings of our own minds, would be the height of presumption; We must take his counsel as it lies before us in the record he hath given us, without adding to it, or subtracting from it. — Again, if none hath first given to him, how erroneous must it be to measure the divine administration even by the most perfect models of government among men? Nay, if it would not seem another paradox, I could almost venture to affirm, that the more perfect any constitution of human government

government is, the less it is adapted to be a standard in this matter. We reckon that system the most excellent, because most agreeable to the soundest principles of reason, by which the original equality of all men by nature is most effectually preserved; where established law, to which the highest are subject, restrains the hand of violence, and supports the meanest individual in the possession of those privileges, which, without such protection, he might be unable to defend. But here no parallel can be drawn with regard to the divine government; nor is there room to reason from the one to the other, even by the remotest analogy. The frame of human policy, the whole system of legislation, is built upon the basis of private right and property: whereas in the kingdom of God, there is, there can be, no such thing as property on the side of the governed: all the subjects are the creatures of the Supreme Ruler; and whatever they possess, they derive from him. The more they receive, the greater debtors they are to his bounty: and when they improve their trust to the utmost extent of their capacity, they have no merit to plead; their

fidelity

fidelity can amount to nothing higher than innocence; while the least failure renders them criminal, and liable to punishment.

So that, in the very nature of things, whatsoever God bestows upon the most perfect of his creatures, must be the effect of pure grace and favour. And if all be favour to the innocent, who have never left the station in which he placed them; surely what is bestowed upon the guilty, must flow from the purest grace, the most condescending exercise of sovereign mercy.

And this is the light in which my text presents to our view the record of God with regard to fallen man; where the whole contents of the gospel constitution are comprehended in this short, but emphatical sentence,

God hath given to us eternal life: and this life is in his Son.

It consists, you see, of two parts:

1. *God hath given to us eternal life.*

2. *This life is in his Son.*

The first part of the record represents

the great Lord of all, in the endearing

character of a munificent benefactor and

tender-hearted father, regarding his guilt-

ty creatures with an eye of pity, and graciously interposing for their relief, after they had wilfully destroyed themselves.

I need not detain you with a tragical description of the fatal effects of our apostasy from God. It may suffice to remind you of what is written, Rom. v. 12. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." This is the view which my text leads us to take of the present state of fallen man. He is not only become mortal, or liable to death, in the common acceptation of that term; but he is already dead in the most important and awful sense of the word. He is separated, or cut off, from the only source of life: and tho' he is still alive to this material world, from which too he must soon remove, yet his connection is broken with the spiritual world; so that the dissolution of the body terminates at once his enjoyments and his hopes. Every thing beyond the grave must wear an aspect of horror: nothing remains for him after that fatal period, but "a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation."

This may help us to a proper conception both of the nature and worth of the bless-

ing here mentioned. The foundation of this *eternal life* is laid in reconciliation with God; for by that we pass from death to life;—the essence of it consisteth in likeness to God;—and it is perfected in the beatific vision, and full enjoyment of God in heaven.

The epithet *eternal*, sufficiently distinguisheth it from that precarious kind of life we at present find ourselves possessed of. It is a life that is not subject to death; neither is it interrupted for one moment by the dissolution of the earthly tabernacle: on the contrary, it acquires new vigour, by that stroke which separates the soul from the body; and then only arrives at full maturity, when the man ceaseth to be any more an inhabitant of this world.

But instead of enlarging upon the nature and excellence of this inestimable blessing, I would rather direct your attention to the manner in which it is bestowed. And here the record is abundantly plain, *God hath GIVEN to us eternal life.* The true import of the word *giving*, is clearly decided by the Apostle Paul, when he says, “The wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is *eternal life*,” where *wages* and *gift* are placed

placed in direct opposition to one another; the first being an exercise of justice, the last an act of free and unmerited favour. And in this light the salvation of sinners is uniformly represented in the sacred writings. "It is your Father's good pleasure," said Christ to his disciples, "to give you the kingdom."—"By grace are ye saved through faith," said St Paul; "and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." And again, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Accordingly, eternal life is styled an *inheritance*; which is inseparably connected with the relation of children: and as by the apostasy we became enemies to God, it is not easy to conceive how enemies can be made children in any other way, than by an act of the purest and most sovereign grace. Were God in any respect weak or indigent, could he be impoverished by the revolt of his subjects, or hurt by the violent efforts of their enmity; it might be wisdom to court their return by the offer of a reward, and even to connect the reward

with such gentle conditions as the proudest heart might easily digest : but this, you must be sensible, is not the case we are considering. God stands in no need of us, or of our services. It requires no exertion of strength to crush his rebellious subjects : if he withdraw for one moment the support of his power, they perish ; for “ in him they all live and move ; ” so that if punishment be deferred, and still more, if benefits be conferred, no cause can be assigned for either but his own sovereign pleasure, the self-moving goodness of his nature.

Were these plain truths attended to, much vain jangling and strife of words might be prevented, and a ready solution found of many of those seemingly intricate questions, with which serious and awakened minds are oft-times perplexed and discouraged.

It is one of the most obvious dictates of sound reason, that the creature owes its existence to the pure favour of the creator. It is equally obvious, that it can only live by those means which the creator hath appointed. Every species of animals hath its peculiar aliment ; so peculiar, that what

is

is food to one species, is not only useless, but frequently noxious to another. A plain convincing evidence of their immediate and absolute dependence upon the will of that being whose workmanship they all are. Whence is it, that those materials upon which the elephant grows to a bulk so enormous, can afford no sustenance to the comparatively diminutive body of man? No answer can be given but this, — The creator hath not chosen and blessed them for that end. Every attempt to live by any other means than God hath appointed, is an attempt to live not only independent of God, but in defiance of his will. Adam tried the experiment, and thereupon became mortal: for it was not the quality of the forbidden tree, but the prohibition of the creator that armed his trespass with the fatal sting.

And can the nobler, the *spiritual life*, be less intimately connected with its author than the animal one? If that be lost by wilful transgression, doth it require less power or less grace to restore it? Or can the revolted creature plead any right to the restitution of a benefit which was freely bestowed at first, and, even before it was forfeited,

forfeited, owed its continuance to the good pleasure of the giver? The absurdity is so glaring, that every one must perceive it as soon as it is mentioned. The blessing of eternal life is, and can be, no other than the *record* hath declared it to be, the free and sovereign gift of God.

An hard saying this to the vain sons of Adam, who would always find something in themselves to boast of! but absolutely necessary to bring them back to that cheerful dependence upon, and willing subjection to, the Father of their spirits; which is the only healthful and orderly state of creatures; the happiness whereof they forfeited by aspiring to become gods. This appears to be the aim of all God's dispensations to the children of men; and is expressly declared to be the ultimate end of the gospel-constitution, 1 Cor. i. 30. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, *He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*"

These few remarks may serve to throw light upon the first part of the record, *God hath given to us eternal life.*

II. THE

II. THE second branch of it doth further inform us, that *this life is in his Son.*

Though God acted as a sovereign, in conferring so great a gift upon any of the dead posterity of Adam, and could not be influenced to this act of grace by any other motive than what he found in his own essential goodness; yet it became his wisdom to exercise mercy in such a manner, as should be expressive of his real character, and give a true and full representation of his other perfections to all his intelligent creatures.

Holiness belongs to God as well as *goodness*; and the sceptre of his kingdom is "a sceptre of righteousness;" and therefore wisdom required, that while his mercy triumphed in the salvation of sinners, his holiness should at the same time shine forth in all its glory, by such a public and awful condemnation of sin, as should demonstrate his infinite abhorrence of that accursed thing, with no less convincing evidence, than if the sword of justice had descended with unabated force upon the guilty heads of the criminals themselves.

This was done in the most effectual manner, by the sufferings of his only-begotten

and

and well-beloved Son, in that very nature which had offended.—When he “who
 “was in the form of God, and thought
 “it not robbery to be equal with God,
 “made himself of no reputation, and took
 “upon him the form of a servant, and
 “being found in fashion as a man, hum-
 “bled himself, and became obedient unto
 “death, even the death of the cross;”
 —then indeed was “sin condemned in the
 “flesh,” and the righteousness of God not
 only revealed but magnified, as it is writ-
 ten, Rom. iii. 25. 26. “God hath set forth
 “his Son to be a propitiation, through
 “faith in his blood, to declare [or mani-
 “fest] his righteousness for the remission
 “of sins:—that he might be just, and ap-
 “pear to be so, “when he justifies those that
 “believe in Jesus.” —Thus the sacrifice
 of Christ is the meritorious cause of that
 justification of the sinner, which not only
 delivers him from present condemnation,
 and future wrath; but, in consequence of
 the grant annexed to the sacrifice, doth
 likewise invest him with a right to life that
 shall never end, and even introduce him
 to the possession of that inestimable bles-
 sing. Hence believers are said, in the pre-
 ceding

ceding chapter, to live *through* Christ, as the *propitiation* for their sins. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live *through* him." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the *propitiation* for our sins."

But there is an obvious difference between living *through*, or by means of Christ, and having life *in* Christ; which last is the form of expression in my text. Nothing less can be meant by a phrase of such intense signification, than, 1st, That the Son, as Mediator, is in full possession of all that life which is the gift of the Father:—2^{dly}, That he is the sole fountain or source from whence life flows to sinners of mankind:—and, 3^{dly}, That in him life is so effectually secured for all who believe on his name, that no adverse power shall be able to deprive them of it.—And if we consult the lively oracles of truth, we shall find each of these particulars, not only implied but asserted, in the clearest and strongest terms.

The *first* is written as with a sun-beam

on almost every page of this sacred book: "The Word was made flesh," saith our apostle, in the 1st chapter of his gospel, at the 14th verse, "and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace, and truth: and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." It was our Lord's own declaration, John v. 26. that "as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." Accordingly St Paul, speaking of the Son in his official character as head of the church, thus writes to the Colossians, (Coloss. i. 19.), "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell." And that none might mistake the nature of that *fulness*, he explains it by another passage in that same epistle, Coloss. iii. 9. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." — To which he subjoins those emphatical words, "Ye are complete in him." — It is written, John iii. 35. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." This was the testimony of John the Baptist concerning him; who informs us in particular, that the Spirit, by which

which the dead sinner is quickened, and born into a new world, "was not given *by measure* unto him." And we are further assured, that he is now in possession of that heavenly kingdom, where the spiritual life begun at the new birth in the hearts of his people, shall arrive at full maturity, and be enjoyed in perfection through all eternity. Thus it appears, that the Son, as Mediator, is possessed of all that life which is the Father's gift to sinners of mankind.

2dly, We are taught, with equal plainness, that the Son hath the entire disposal of life, and is the sole fountain or source from whence it flows. Thus our Lord said to the Jews, John v. 21. "As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." In his conference with Martha, at the sepulchre of her brother Lazarus, he styled himself the *resurrection* and the *life*; and added, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth on me, shall never die." The manner of imparting this life he illustrates by the similitude of a vine and its branches. "I,"

said he, "am the vine, and ye are the
 "branches. As the branch cannot bear
 "fruit of itself, except it abide in the
 "vine; no more can ye, except ye abide
 "in me: For without me (or separated
 "from me) ye can do nothing." Accord-
 "ingly he gets the name of "the head,
 "from which all the body, by joints and
 "bands having nourishment ministered,
 "and knit together, increaseth with the
 "increase of God."—The *closefness* of
 this union is thus expressed, 1 Cor. vi. 17.
 "He that is joined to the Lord is ONE
 "SPIRIT."—And the Apostle Paul, in de-
 scribing his own life as "a man in Christ,"
 Gal. ii. 20. after having said, "I am cru-
 "cified with Christ," he immediately sub-
 joins, "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but
Christ liveth in me: and the life which I
 now live in the flesh, I live by the faith
 of the Son of God, who loved me, and
 "gave himself for me."—And this leads
 to the
 3^d particular I mentioned, as included
 in that strong expression, *This life is in his*
Son; namely, That in him it is effectually
secured for all that believe on him, so that
 no adverse power shall be able to deprive
 them

them of it. Nothing can be more explicit
 upon this head than our Lord's own
 words, John x. 27. *et seqq.* "My sheep
 "hear my voice, and I know them, and
 "they follow me. And I give unto them
 "eternal life, and they shall never perish;
 "neither shall any pluck them out of my
 "hand. My Father which gave them me,
 "is greater than all; and none is able to
 "pluck them out of my Father's hand. I
 "and my Father are one."—It is probable
 that Paul had this declaration in his eye,
 when he thus wrote to the Christians at
 Colosse, Coloss. iii. 3. "Your life is hid
 "(that is, safely lodged) *with Christ* in
 "God." Indeed the treasure was too pre-
 cious to be committed to any creature. Of
 this, the example of Adam, in his greatest
 perfection, affords a striking proof. How
 soon was his own life, and the life of all
 his posterity, forfeited in his hands? Not
 the highest seraph; none other but Emma-
 nuel, God in our nature, was equal to the
 trust. But with him it is in absolute safe-
 ty. He is able to keep that which the Fa-
 ther hath committed to him; And there-
 fore, "because he liveth, all who have fled
 "to him for refuge, shall live also;" and
 may

may be fully assured, that "when he ~~who~~
~~his~~ *their* life shall appear, then shall they
 "likewise appear with him in glory." Accordingly, the apostle subjoins to my
 text, *He that bath the Son, bath life.* He
 doth not say, he shall have life at some di-
 stant period, but he *bath* it already, in pre-
 sent possession. And well might he say so,
 when he recollected these words of our
 Lord, which his own pen had recorded in
 the 6th chapter of his gospel, "I *am* the
 bread of life. — I am the living bread which
 came down from heaven: if any man eat of this
 bread, he shall live for ever. — As the living
 Father hath sent me, and I live by the Fa-
 ther; so he that eateth me, even he shall live
 by me." — For how can he die who feed-
 eth upon that which giveth life? He
 surely must have life in all its extent and
 perfection, whose sustenance or aliment is
 no other than essential life itself.

Hence it appears, how much they mis-
 take the gospel constitution, who represent
 eternal life as a distant reward, suspended
 upon the performance of certain conditions
 on the part of the creature: whereas sal-
 vation through Christ, though perfected in
 heaven, is a present salvation; of which
 the

the various particulars, which are commonly styled *terms* of acceptance with God, are in truth constituent parts, suited to the present state of Christians; and ought therefore to be considered as the genuine actings, and consequently the proper evidences, of life received from Christ, but not as the conditions or means of obtaining it. That our apostle viewed the matter in this light, is evident from the 13th verse of this chapter; where, in the review of the large account he had given of the special duties that belong to believers, and the characters by which they are distinguished, he thus concludes: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God," (not that ye may obtain, but) "that ye may know that ye have eternal life," by the free gift of the Father, in consequence of your union with his blessed Son, who hath the fulness of life in his hand, as the proprietor, the dispenser, and the guardian, thereof. For eternal life doth really commence at that happy moment, when, by the new birth, we enter into the family of God, and become his children through faith in Christ Jesus.

THUS

THUS far have I endeavoured to illustrate the record that God hath given concerning his Son. Permit me then to ask, after all you have been hearing, in what light doth the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ now appear to you?—Is he that object of terror, which the jealousy of an evil conscience is apt to paint him?—Can you rationally conclude, or is there even room to suspect, that he is an enemy to your happiness?—Oh! with what eyes do they read this sacred volume, who are capable for a moment of entertaining such a thought? Is it not the obvious tendency, as well as the declared purpose of every thing contained in the scriptures of truth, to prove what the apostle twice repeats in the preceding chapter, *GOD IS LOVE*? What kind of evidence would satisfy you? It is my earnest desire that the question should be fully tried. My interest in the decision is equal to yours: none hath more to gain or to lose than I have.

Devise the security that you esteem most valid: let nothing be omitted that you can suppose would be of avail for binding the most artful and fallacious of your fellow-men; and when you have done, I challenge

lence you to mention one article among them all, that is wanting in the security which God hath freely afforded you.

When a bare *declaration* of one's good intention doth not satisfy us, we may ask a *promise*; and if doubts still remain, we may proceed to require the interposition of an *oath*; but there we must rest as to verbal security: "An oath for confirmation is an end of all strife." Need I remind you, that without your solicitation, God hath been graciously pleased to give you all these? "For God being willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

When personal obligation is not deemed sufficient, a *cautioner*, or surety, is another expedient which human wisdom hath devised. And is not such an one provided by the great God? not a creature, though of the highest order, but his *own Son*, by whom all things were made, even Jesus;

the Mediator of the new covenant, who is expressly styled the *surety* of a better testament.

If, after all, any jealousy remains, we must next, I suppose, have recourse to *legal* security, and may demand a written obligation, a deed executed with every essential formality. — Now what kind of deed hath greatest force and validity? None, I apprehend, is more universally held sacred and inviolable than a *testament*. This was Paul's opinion, when he said, Gal. iii. 15.

“Though it be but a man's testament, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.” And are not we furnished with this very species of obligation? a testament confirmed and rendered unalterable by the death of the testator, with this additional security against its being abstracted, erased, or defeated, by the infidelity of those to whom the execution of it may be committed, (a security which never did, nor ever can, exist in any other case), namely, that the testator, who died to give it force, revived, and liveth for evermore, to be the executor of his own deed in its utmost extent.

Can any thing further be required? — If

If distrust be very great, one might perhaps wish to have a valuable pledge, something of equal worth put into his hand, till the obligation be fulfilled. What shall I say?—Let unbelief blush, and be ashamed to open its mouth any more, when it looks to the *unspeakable gift of God*, and hears how Paul reasons upon it, Rom. viii. 32. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" It is really astonishing, that such profusion of evidence should not excite in men a greater curiosity to discover the true reason and design of it. Were a superior transacting with us in the way of bargain, though he should profess that he meant to do us a favour, would not the offer of such multiplied superabundant security for the performance of his part of the agreement, discover such an anxiety to get the bargain concluded, as would naturally breed in us a secret suspicion, that however moderate and equitable the terms proposed might appear, yet, upon the whole, the chief advantage would accrue to himself? Now it is agreed on all hands, that to impute any

such interested views to the great sovereign of the universe, would be equally absurd and blasphemous : for how differently soever men have conceived of the gospel-constitution, it is universally admitted to be a covenant of *grace*. And yet, my brethren, if eternal life be not a gift absolutely free, but the wages of service to be done by us, I cannot help thinking, that, let the terms proposed be ever so moderate, yet such means employed for gaining our consent to them, could hardly fail to tincture our minds with some degree of these evil furnishings I have mentioned. Whereas, upon the plan of the *record*, as expressed in my text, every part of the divine procedure appears perfectly wise, consistent, and gracious. *God* and *man* are represented in their proper characters : *God*, infinitely good, and independently happy; shewing mercy to the miserable who derived their existence from him, and have nothing to give but what his own bounty hath bestowed upon them : *Man*, on the other hand, in this fallen state, a guilty, and, of consequence, a fearful, suspicious creature ; conscious that he deserves punishment, and hard to be persuaded that there

there is so much goodness with God, as freely to pardon his offences, and receive him again into favour. These fears beget and cherish that enmity against God, which is the distinguishing characteristic of the carnal mind. We feel the effect of injuries upon our own hearts, and we are apt to judge of God by what we feel in ourselves.

It was to vanquish this distrust, that God hath condescended to deal with us in the manner I have represented; that by giving us every kind of assurance that jealousy itself can devise, we may be reduced to this necessity, either to give God the lie, or, being convinced that he is *love*, to rely upon his faithful word of promise; believing, that he who bestowed life at first by a free act of the purest bounty, hath goodness enough to restore life after it hath been forfeited, by another act of as free mercy and grace. This is the plain account which the scriptures give us of faith in Christ. "If we receive the witness of man," saith our apostle, in the 9th verse of this chapter, "the witness of God is greater:" and, John iii. 33. receiving the divine testimony is said to be a *testifying*

to our seal that God is true. Accordingly, in the verse preceding my text, unbelief is represented, as deriving its chief malignity from this very circumstance, that it denies the truth of God. For thus it is written, "He that believeth not God, maketh him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son.

You see, then, upon the whole, one great end of the holy sacrament of our Lord's supper, and the use we ought to make of it. — Here Christ is represented to us as the propitiation for our sins; suffering the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. And we are assured, that in consequence of his obedience unto death, whereby the unchangeable righteousness of God was fully displayed, and infinitely glorified, he is now exalted to the throne, and hath eternal life committed to his disposal, that he may impart it to all who are made willing to receive it as the gift of his Father, through the merit of his blood. Now, it is the express command of God, that

that we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ: and it is the no less express declaration of the Son, that he will in no wise cast out such as come unto him. Nay, in this condescending ordinance, he cometh to us; and under the visible symbols of bread and wine, gives himself, with all the fulness of life that dwelleth in him, to every believing soul. — What then is the counterpart that belongs to us? Is it not to behold and admire the amazing love of God, that we may be no more faithless, but believing? — Is it not to do what the Israelite was directed to do, when he brought the appointed sacrifice to the high priest? He laid his hand upon the head of the victim; and confessing his sin over it, acknowledged, that he was dead in law; and that what remained of life, was to be held by him purely in virtue of that pardon which God had graciously annexed to the sacrifice. — In like manner, let us go to the altar of God; and over the memorials of that infinite sacrifice, chosen and accepted by the Father, in which his own dear Son is both the priest and the victim, let us acknowledge our forfeiture of life, and justify the sentence

tence whereby we were condemned to die; explicitly declaring, in the sight of God, angels, and men, that, renouncing every other claim, we thankfully accept eternal life, as the gift of God through Jesus Christ; and consent to hold it solely by *his* right, who died that we might live through *him*. *Amen.*

S E R -

EVery thinking person, whose mind hath been enlightened to form just apprehensions of God, and of himself, will be anxious to obtain a satisfying answer to the following questions:

1. What encouragement hath a sinner to draw near to God? and

2. After what manner shall he draw near to him, to as to find acceptance?

Some, I know, look upon them both as

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S E R M O N VIII.

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HEBREWS, x. 19.—22.

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God: let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

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very easy subjects of inquiry. They have such low conceptions of the divine purity, and so high an opinion of their own dignity and worth, that they see little, if any occasion at all, for a reconciling mediator to introduce them into the presence of God. They admit, that repentance for what hath been done amiss, appears highly reasonable, and perhaps may be necessary; but when, like men of candour and probity, they have confessed their faults, and humbled themselves so far as to ask forgiveness, and to promise amendment, then, they presume, that God is too generous to require any further reparation; that he will readily pardon what is past, and receive them into favour, as if they had never offended him.

But however such persons may magnify their own foolish imaginations, and arrogantly style them the dictates of reason; yet it might easily be demonstrated, that this scheme is absolutely irrational, and incapable of giving satisfaction to any serious unprejudiced mind. Nothing can be more obvious, than that the source of all being deserves the supreme love, and the most perfect unceasing obedience, of
the

the creatures he hath made. This is the true law of nature, that is, a law founded in the nature of God and of man. It is no arbitrary constitution, but infinitely fit and reasonable in itself; and therefore equally incapable either of repeal or abatement; so that, in the language of our shorter catechism, every deviation from it deserveth God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and in that which is to come. Nor would it be consistent with the holiness and justice of God, to remit the punishment, and receive the transgressor into favour, without such a public satisfaction to justice, as may testify his abhorrence of all unrighteousness, and his resolution to support the authority of his law, as effectually as the due, unabated punishment of the sinner himself could do. These are the dictates of sound reason; and therefore, all whose minds have been awakened to serious consideration, will be solicitous to know what encouragement they have to draw near to a holy and righteous God; and how they should approach him so as to find acceptance.

Now, to each of these inquiries, the

Z a passage

passage I have been reading affords a direct and satisfying answer.

I. If any shall ask, What warrant or encouragement hath a creature conscious of guilt, to draw near to a God of unspotted holiness, and inflexible justice?

The apostle will inform him, that the chief of sinners (for this was the title he assumed to himself, 1 Tim. i. 15.) hath boldness, or, (according to the marginal reading) *liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he, in the character of high-priest over the house of God, hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, or that human nature in which he suffered, as a propitiatory sacrifice, or sin-offering, in our place.*

It will readily occur to you, that all these peculiar forms of expression allude to the instituted means of access to God under the Mosaic dispensation: and it were to be wished, that Christians were better acquainted with that ancient worship than they commonly are; for without some knowledge of this kind, much, I need not say of the beauty and energy, of the New-Testament

Testament language, but even of its true meaning and import, must escape their observation.

The principal service of this day will not permit me to spend so much time as would be necessary for tracing out the several parts of the allusion with perspicuity and accuracy: it must at present suffice to give you a general view of the apostle's reasoning in the foregoing part of this epistle, with which my text is evidently connected as an obvious inference, and practical conclusion.

There we are informed, that the correspondence with the God of Israel, in all the public exercises of religious worship, was maintained and conducted by the intervention of the high-priest. None of the other Jews, of whatever rank or office, were permitted in person to approach the symbols of the divine presence. To him alone it belonged to pass through the curtain or vail, which separated the first tabernacle, wherein the ordinary priests ministered, from the second tabernacle, or holiest of all, which had the golden vessel, and the ark of the covenant, with the cherubims of glory over it, shadowing the
mercy-

mercy-seat. "Into this second tabernacle," saith the apostle, at the 7th verse of the preceding chapter, "went the high-priest alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people." He then proceeds to observe, that the office of high-priest, the worldly sanctuary, and the various ordinances of divine service which belonged to it, were only figures for the time then present; and plainly shews, that they were all typical of, derived their significance from, and received their full accomplishment in, the priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ; who, "by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." After which, he goes on to prove, with great force and perspicuity, that what he calls the *first covenant*, or the *Mosaic constitution*, carried on its very form or aspect the most legible marks of imperfection and decay. No permanent high-priest belonged to it, that office being exercised

crucified by men compassed about with in-
 firmities; each of whom, by death, gave
 place to his successor. Besides, the gifts
 and sacrifices they offered, were, in their
 own nature, so mean and inconsiderable,
 that they could not make him that did
 the service, perfect as pertaining to the
 conscience; for it was impossible that
 the blood of goats and of calves should,
 by any intrinsic virtue, "take away sin."
 Nay, the repetition of these sacrifices
 was a plain confession of their weakness
 and insufficiency; as the apostle reasons
 most conclusively in the beginning of this
 chapter. "For the law," saith he, "har-
 ving a shadow of good things to come,
 and not the very image of the things,
 can never with those sacrifices which
 they offered year by year continually,
 make the comers thereunto perfect.
 For then," adds he in the form of a que-
 stion, "would they not have ceased to be
 offered? because that the worshippers
 once purged, should have had no more
 conscience of sins. But in those sacri-
 fices there is a remembrance again made
 of sins once every year." Whereas
 Christ is an ever-living and unchangeable
 high-

high-priest. The blood which he offered is of infinite worth and efficacy, being the blood of Emmanuel, God in our nature. Accordingly there is no repetition of his sacrifice: for thus the apostle proceeds at the 11th verse, "Every high priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man," this God-man, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." He is now gone to the heavenly sanctuary, "having finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness." And nothing remains for him to do, but to bless his people with the free and irrevocable remission of their sins, according to that promise of the covenant, quoted vers. 17. *their sins and iniquities will I remember no more*; and to dispense to all who are willing to receive (and to hold it by his right) that fulness of life which is lodged in

in his hand, as the "Saviour of the body," and the "King and Head over all things to the church."

This short review of the apostle's reasoning, serves to throw light upon the passage I am further to discourse upon — We see how the *blood of Jesus* gives boldness or freedom to enter into the heavenly sanctuary, even by removing that guilt which separates us from God, and renders us incapable of holding friendly communion or intercourse with him. — We likewise see a reason, why the way of admittance into the holiest is called, not only a *new*, but a *living* way. The entrance into the worldly sanctuary was indeed by blood; for, as the apostle had observed at the 22d verse of the preceding chapter, "almost all things," under the old dispensation, "were purged with blood; and without shedding of Blood there is no remission:" but then it was the blood of animals inferior to man; which, after they were slain, were utterly consumed, and could live no more: whereas the blood by which we now enter into the heavenly sanctuary, is the blood of him who hath life in himself; who, though he volunta-

rily submitted to death for a season, yet soon rose again from the grave by his own power; "who is now alive, and behold, he liveth for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and of death."—We further learn, upon what account his *fleshy* or human nature, gets the name of a *vail*, through which the new and living way into the holiest is consecrated for us. It was by becoming man that he was qualified to suffer in our place for the expiation of our guilt. In him we behold God clothed with the character of a *reconciler*, as the God of love, the God who is love. His flesh then is such a vail, as doth not exclude from, but opens to give us admittance to a throne of grace: nay, Christ himself is the true propitiatory, or mercy-seat: the sacrifice, the altar, and the high priest, are all united in his wonderful person. In short, "he is the way, the truth, and the life;" the true, the living, and the only way to the Father.

Here then we are furnished with a clear and satisfying answer to the first question proposed, viz. What warrant or encouragement hath a guilty creature to draw near to a holy and righteous God?

We acknowledge
Jesus

Jesus the high-priest over the house of God, who suffered for us in his flesh, our human nature, hath, by his "that offering and sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour," consecrated a new and living way of access, whereby we have boldness to enter into the most holy place, and to draw near to God under the sprinkling of his blood.

II. The answer to the second question, which regards the manner of our approach, is no less clearly expressed in the following words: Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

The 1st qualification is a true heart.

Truth is directly opposed to dissimulation or falsehood. A true heart, then, in drawing near to God by the blood of Jesus, must be a heart that corresponds to the profession we make; and what that profession is, in the case before us, may, with ease and certainty, be collected from what was delivered under the former head.

When we profess to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, we explicitly renounce all pretensions or hopes of obtaining admittance by any other means. We

acknowledge the forfeiture we have incurred by our guilt, and subscribe to the justice of the sentence that condemns us: we confess, that we have done, and can do, nothing, to recommend us to the favour of God, or that may found the remotest claim to pardon and acceptance. All our own righteousnesses we throw aside as filthy rags. In short, we plead guilty at a tribunal of justice, and adopt the language of the publican, as expressing our true character, and the only form of address that befits our state,—*God be merciful to me a sinner.*

When the Jew brought the sacrifice which the law had appointed for his offence, to the door of the tabernacle; when he laid his hand upon the head of the victim, confessing his sin over it, and then delivered it to the high-priest, that its blood might be shed for the expiation of his guilt; what was the true meaning and intent of that service? Did not the offender present the victim that it might be substituted in his place? Did he not thereby acknowledge, that he had incurred the penalty of death; and that the dying agonies of the devoted animal were
only

only a faint representation of what was strictly due to himself? Was not this a virtual renunciation of any right to the continuance of life, but what arose from the acceptance of the sacrifice in his room, and the gratuitous promise of remission annexed to that acceptance? — And can any thing less than this be meant, by *drawing near to God by the blood of Jesus?* — Was there more virtue in the typical than in the real atonement? or is less to be expected from the substance than from the shadow? Did the offending Jew, when he made his confession over the head of the victim, look back to any instances of past obedience, or even forward to any purposes of future amendment, and conjoin these with the blood of the sacrifice, for rendering it more effectual to obtain pardon and acceptance? Surely none who attended to the nature and form of the institution, could be led by it, to dream of any mixture of this kind. And can we suppose, that the blood of Jesus, by which we have boldness to enter into the holiest, is only a joint cause with our own imperfect obedience of our obtaining admission into the heavenly sanctuary? Is no more meant

meant by his *consecrating for us a new and living way*, than that he hath repaired the old way which sin had broken; and by removing some obstructions, rendered it more smooth and accessible than originally it was? Hath he, instead of paying to the last mite what justice demanded, done no more by his sacrifice, than purchased an easy composition of the debt, that an hundred pence might be accepted for the ten thousand talents?—Is it possible, that human pride and vanity can give such a colouring to this motley scheme, as to make it pass, with any reasonable creature, for that marvellous doing of the Lord, that highest exertion of wisdom and grace, which angels themselves desire to look into?—To account for this, we must have recourse to what the Apostle Paul writes, 1 Cor. ii. 14. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” He is become vain in his imaginations, and his foolish heart is darkened. But they whose eyes are opened by the Spirit of truth, will cordially join with the same apostle, and say

as

as he did, Philip. iii. 7. 8. 9. What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord :—and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. This is the language of a true heart, *in drawing near to God by the blood of Jesus*; which may suffice to explain the first qualification here mentioned. I do not say that no more is included in it; but this I affirm, that such an absolute renunciation of every other ground of hope, is one principal thing implied in the true heart, as it stands connected with the apostle's reasoning, if not the very thing he had most directly in his eye.

2dly, To a true heart, the apostle adds, *the full assurance of faith.*

This leads us back to the great objects of faith that have already been presented to our view, viz. the high-priest over the house of God;—the vail of his human na-

ture,

ture, which is the passage into the sanctuary;—and the *blood* of his sacrifice, that emboldens us to enter in:—And it is required, that our faith in this way of access be full and assured.

The *true heart*, giving a faithful verdict upon the demerit of sin, and subscribing to the justice of the sentence, whereby the sinner is excluded from the presence of God, acknowledgeth this to be the *only* way. But *faith* advanceth a step farther, and presents it to the enlightened mind, as a safe, a sure, and infallible way. Hear its genuine language from the mouth of our apostle, 1 Tim. i. 15. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” Faith, contemplating the dignity of the High-Priest, and the nature and design of the sacrifice he offered, can have no doubt of the *merit* of his blood; but may conclude, firmly, and without hesitation, that it hath sufficient efficacy to cleanse from all sin. But when it proceeds farther, and reads the commission he received from the Father; when it weighs the evidence that ariseth from his resurrection

resurrection and ascension, of the Father's infinite delight in him, and his perfect satisfaction with his whole conduct as Mediator; above all, when it follows him into the heavenly sanctuary, whither he hath carried his atoning blood, and sees the reward conferred upon him for his voluntary obedience unto death, a name given him above every name, and all things in heaven and on earth put under his feet: — What shall I say? from this entire view of God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, can any other conclusion be drawn, than what the Apostle John hath done before us, viz. *God is love*? — So complete is the evidence afforded us in the gospel, of God's merciful nature, and of the good-will he bears to the children of men, that the most entire credit to his declarations upon this head, is in effect no more than a *setting to our seal*, to what one should think the most obvious and self-evident of all propositions, *that God is true*. And is there a man to be found that denies this proposition? Dare any be so outrageously insolent and injurious, as to call God a *liar*? Let me refer you to the same apostle, who testified that God is

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love, for an answer to this question, and he will inform you, 1 John v. 10. that every one who believeth not the record that God hath given of his Son, maketh him a liar. This is a repetition of the first transgression, with peculiar circumstances of aggravation. *Unbelief* was the root of Adam's sin; for had he truly believed that the threatening was to be executed, he would not have dared to incur the penalty. And can it be less criminal to charge God with falsehood in a profession of kindness, than in a threatening of displeasure? Nay, is it not a worse species of deceit, to flatter with delusive hopes, than to frighten with unreal terrors? and yet an unbeliever of gospel-grace doth in effect charge God with this very species of deceit; and that not only in the face of the strongest repeated declarations of goodwill, but against every kind of confirmation that the most distrustful suspicion could require or devise. Adam had no other restraint but a naked threatening: he had seen no exertion of punitive justice; every thing around him was expressive of the perfect goodness of its author; and there was no precedent or example of the
penalty

penalty with which the prohibition was enforced. But what have we in support of the gospel record? or rather, let me ask, What addition could be made to the evidence already afforded us, that it is faithful and true? We have the promise of God, confirmed by his oath; we have the gift of his own Son to be the propitiation for our sins; we are not only permitted, but invited, nay commanded, to come to the Saviour, with this most endearing declaration, that such as come to him shall in no wise be rejected or cast out by him. And shall not this accumulated, this superabundant evidence, deter us from the presumption of calling God a liar? or rather, shall it not produce in us, that *full assurance of faith*, with which the apostle exhorteth us to draw near to God by the blood of Jesus?

The third qualification, expressed in these words, *having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience*, is an advance upon the other two, and implies a personal application of the blood of Christ to ourselves: for it is this alone that, as we read vers. 14. of the preceding chapter, *can purge the conscience from dead works*, and vanquish

those fears of wrath, which, by representing God as an implacable enemy, drive us from his presence, and render him an object of terror and aversion, rather than of desire and love.

This personal application of the blood of sprinkling, is too commonly considered in the light of a *privilege*, rather than as a *duty*. And a privilege it surely is; but such a privilege as we are strictly bound in duty to make use of: *For this*, saith the Apostle John, *is the command of God, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ*: which certainly includes more than a general persuasion, however full and assured, that Jesus is a necessary and sufficient Saviour. It can mean no less, than that they to whom the command is given, should believe on the name of Christ for *themselves*, and put their trust in him, as one who is both willing and able to save them in particular.

But the question may be put, and it hath been put by many, How am I to know that this obliging command is addressed to *me*? It might suffice for an answer, to desire those who ask the question, to turn over to that part of scrip-

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ture where the words I have just now quoted are recorded, *John iii. 23.* There it is written, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."

Now, no body doubts, that the last of these precepts extends to him; and yet the same authority which enjoins mutual love, commands us to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; and the apostle, you see, unites them both in one sentence. How comes it then, that any should make a difference between the two, in point either of extent or obligation, or limit the one commandment any more than the other?

But as this is a difficulty with which the truly serious only are apt to be distressed, I must not stop here, but beg them to consider, whether it would not be more reasonable to put the question in this form, How do I know, or rather, What ground can I find to suspect, that the commandment to believe on the Saviour doth *not* extend to me? It is undeniable, that none of the human race are excepted by name; the invitation or call is addressed to men indefinitely, "Look unto me, and be ye saved,"

"saved, all the ends of the earth."—"Un-
 "to you, O men, I call, and my voice is
 "to the sons of men." Say, then, my
 friends, under what fatal denomination
 can you find yourselves excluded from the
 fountain opened for sin and for unclean-
 ness? Surely not as *sinners*; for this de-
 nomination is common to all men, and
 "Christ came not to call the righteous,
 "but sinners to repentance;" this was his
 very errand, "to seek and to save that
 "which was lost." Neither can it be as
great sinners; for Paul testifies, that Christ
 came to save the *chief* of sinners. "His
 "blood cleanseth from all sin;" and many
 examples are recorded of the most infam-
 ous transgressors, who have been wash-
 ed, and sanctified, and justified, in the
 name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spi-
 rit of our God. Much less then can it be
 as *deeply-convinced* and *self-condemning* sin-
 ners; for under this denomination you are
 expressly invited to have recourse to him;
 "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and
 "are heavy laden, and I will give you
 "rest." The commission he received,
 was to bind up the broken-hearted, to
 bring forth the prisoners out of the prison-
 house,

house, and to comfort those that mourn. Are you *wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked*? Such precisely was the state of the Laodiceans, with this only difference, from whence no discouraging inference can be drawn, that they *knew it not*, whereas you do: yet even to them were these gracious words addressed by our Lord himself, Rev. iii. 18. "I counsel thee to buy
 "of me, gold tried in the fire; that thou
 "mayest be rich, and white raiment that
 "thou mayest be clothed, and to anoint
 "thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest
 "see." Nay, (which methinks should put
 an end to all further questioning upon this
 head), the epistle directed to them concludes with that unlimited offer of gospel-grace, which might justly be introduced with a note of admiration, "BEHOLD, I
 "stand at the door and knock; if *any*
 "man will hear my voice, and open the
 "door, I will come in to him, and sup
 "with him, and he with me." Beware
 then of setting bounds where God hath set
 none. If you feel your need of Christ as
 the *only* Saviour; if your eyes have been
 so far opened, as to see that he is worthy
 to be depended upon, and "mighty to
 "save,"

“ save,” let no objections drawn from your own unworthiness, which, under the covert and semblance of humility, hides the daring presumption of giving God the lie, keep you back from this great *High Priest*, or prevent your application of his atoning blood, for *sprinkling your hearts from an evil conscience*, and introducing you into the holiest with filial boldness, by that new and living way which he hath consecrated for you, through the veil of his flesh.

WHAT the apostle subjoins, *having our bodies washed with pure water*, may allude to those purifications enjoined by the law, which served to remind the Jews of the unspotted holiness of the God of Israel, and of that reverence which ought to possess their minds in all their approaches to his gracious presence ; though I cannot help thinking, that these words were intended by the apostle to introduce a new exhortation ; and ought therefore to be transferred to the following verse : in which case, without any straining, they obviously apply to the ordinance of baptism, and are urged, with great propriety, to enforce a steadfast unwavering adherence to that faith which

which the converted Hebrews had professed with such solemnity, when, at their admission into the church of Christ, their bodies were washed with pure water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

But I shall not detain you any longer from the proper business of the day. Only let me call upon you, before I conclude, to look up to this great *High-Priest over the house of God*, for that Holy Spirit, without whom, neither sermons, nor sacraments, have any virtue or efficacy. It is he alone that can bestow upon us the qualifications here required. Let each of us then plead the promise of the Father, begging, that the Spirit of all grace may be given, “to take of the things of Christ’s, and to shew them unto us;” that from just views of our High-Priest, and of the new and living way he hath consecrated for us by his blood, we may be enabled to draw near to God *with true hearts, in the full assurance of faith*; and receive such tokens of his love while we sit at his table, as shall be an earnest and pledge to us, of that still more near and joyful approach to him in the heavenly sanctuary;

sanctuary; where we shall no more see him in the glass of ordinances, but face to face; where we shall be thoroughly changed into his image, and enjoy him fully, without interruption, and without end.

Amen.

THE grounds of a Christian's faith and hope are not only sufficient to satisfy his own mind, but capable likewise of being described, and exhibited, in such a manner, as cannot fail to give full satisfaction to every sober-minded inquirer. Genuine Christianity is far from declining any means of truth, whereby truth is distinguished from delusion, or imposture: on the contrary, it courts the light, and the more fervently it is made the brighter it shines. "The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, and purified seven times." The evidence by which our faith and hope are supported.

in the glads of ordinances, but face to face; where we shall be thoroughly changed into his image, and enjoy him fully, without interruption, and without end.

ROMANS, v. 10.

For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son: much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

THE grounds of a Christian's faith and hope, are not only sufficient to satisfy his own mind, but capable likewise of being described, and vindicated, in such a manner, as cannot fail to give full satisfaction to every sober unprejudiced inquirer.

Genuine Christianity is far from declining any means of trial, whereby truth is distinguished from delusion or imposture: on the contrary, it courts the light; and the more severely it is tried, the brighter it shines: "The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, and purified seven times." The evidence by which our faith and hope are

supported, hath already stood the test of many generations; and the most violent attacks of its enemies, instead of shaking the foundation, have only served to shew, that it is laid by that same almighty hand which created and upholdeth these heavens and this earth. Nay, these heavens, and this earth, shall at length pass away; but one jot, or one tittle, in these lively oracles of wisdom and truth, shall in no wise pass away till all be fulfilled.

The privileges of a Christian are not a picture drawn by fancy, neither doth his comfort take its rise from those inexplicable impressions to which the dreaming enthusiast is constrained to resort. The intelligent believer stands upon firm ground, and is always "ready to give an answer to every man that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him."

Do you inquire into the *object* of his hope, he will tell you, without hesitation, that he looks for a portion after death, in comparison whereof, this earth which we inhabit, and all that it contains, shrink into nothing, yea, less than nothing, and vanity.

Whatever we behold in this material world,

world, hath the seeds of dissolution sown in its very nature. Our bodies themselves are only tabernacles of clay, which ere long shall be crumbled into dust, and see corruption.

Here we breathe, as it were, in the midst of contagion and defilement; and the best things we enjoy are liable to be perverted, either into the instruments or occasions of sin. Honour tempteth to pride, power to oppression, and affluence to sensuality and criminal indulgence. Few, comparatively speaking, can carry with an even and steady hand the full cup of prosperity any length of way; like Jeshurun, they are apt to kick when they wax fat, and lightly to esteem the rock of their salvation.

Nay, though they should escape the pollution of these earthly enjoyments, by using them with moderation, and employing them to the purposes for which they were designed; yet so precarious and fugitive are all sublunary things, that it is impossible for any man to promise upon their continuance. Who can say, "My mountain standeth strong, I shall never be moved?" Can any man guard himself at
all

all times against secret fraud and open violence?—Nay, every element, the wind, the fire, the water, may in a moment be armed with sufficient force to make the unwelcome separation betwixt us and the best of our worldly possessions.—Thus corruptible and defiled, thus uncertain and transitory, is all that is most admired and courted here below.

Not so the portion of the saints; the inheritance they look for is “incorruptible, “undefiled, and fadeth not away.”—As it hath no principle of decay within itself, so neither can it be wasted by any thing from without. It is “reserved,” or laid up, “for them in heaven;” a place of absolute safety, beyond the reach of every adverse power, and equally secured against deceit and rapine. *There* is no thief to steal, no spoiler to lay waste. In those regions of perfect light and love no such piteous complaints are heard as these,—“My bowels! my bowels! I am pained at my very heart, because thou hast heard, O my soul! the sound of the trumpet, and the alarm of war.” All above is order and harmony; there is nothing to hurt, nothing to destroy, through the whole extent
of

of the heavenly Jerusalem, that imperial seat of Zion's King.—Such, can the believer say, is the *object* of my hope.

Do you inquire into the grounds of his hope, he hath an answer ready in the words of my text, and can say with the Apostle Paul,—*If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son: much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

Here the reasoning is at once profound and obvious; it is simple and ingenious at the same time: so simple and obvious, that the mind, with one glance, perceives its force, and is satisfied; so profound and ingenious, that the more accurately it is examined, the more conclusive it will appear.

From the efficacy of Christ's death, which the apostle had proved at large in the foregoing part of this epistle, he infers, in this passage, the superior efficacy of his restored life:—I say, his *restored life*; for the life here referred to, was not that life previous to his crucifixion, which he led upon earth in the form of a servant; but the life he now lives at the right hand of God, where he is exalted to the throne

as a Prince and a Saviour, "having a name
 " given him above every name, that at
 " the name of Jesus every knee should
 " bow, and every tongue confess, that he
 " is Lord, to the glory of God the Fa-
 " ther."

Two comparisons are here stated; the
one betwixt the past and present state of
 believers; formerly they were *enemies* to
 God, now they are become *friends*. The
other comparison is betwixt the past and
 present condition of the Saviour; once he
 was *dead*, now he is *alive*. And the pro-
 position that connects the two is this, That
reconciliation to God was entirely owing
 to the *death* of Christ, as the meritorious
 procuring cause. These are the premisses
 from whence the apostle draws his conclu-
 sion, and proves, with demonstrative e-
 vidence, the absolute certainty of the
 complete and everlasting salvation of be-
 lievers.

The only principle he assumes, is what
 every one must admit as soon as it is men-
 tioned, viz. that reconciliation to an ene-
 my is a more difficult exercise of goodness
 than beneficence to a friend. Upon which
 he thus reasons, That if the *death* of
 Christ

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Christ had sufficient virtue to produce the greater effect, viz. reconciliation to those who formerly were enemies, there can be no room to doubt, that the *life* of Christ, which is a more powerful cause, must be sufficient to produce the lesser effect; lesser I mean in point of difficulty, namely, the continuance of the divine friendship and beneficence to those whom his death hath reconciled, till he bring them in due time to the full possession of the purchased inheritance.

Say then, my brethren, may not the hope of a Christian be justly denominated a rational hope, or, as the apostle terms it, vers. 5. "a hope that maketh not ashamed?" And may not the believer reply, with holy exultation, to every one that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him, *If when I was an enemy, I was reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, I shall be saved by his life*: his death was the price of the inheritance I look for, and his restored life is my evidence that the price was accepted, and the purchase made.—This renders my hope assured and vigorous.—Did it depend upon any thing in myself, on the strength,

or wisdom, or worthiness, of the creature, it would quickly languish and die: but as it leans upon him who rose from the grave to die no more, who ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and is now exalted at the right hand of God, it is become "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" for the Father raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, for this very end, that every ground of jealousy being removed, my faith and hope might be in God; 1 Pet. i. 21.

It must already have occurred to you, that none can apply this reasoning to themselves, but those who are previously reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Here begins the hope of a sinner, and here likewise must I begin to bring the subject home to our own hearts, by inquiring who among us can say, that we have experienced this blessed fruit of the Redeemer's death.

And for our assistance in this important trial, I shall endeavour, in few words, to mark out some of the principal steps, by which the soul is most usually led by the Spirit of God into a vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ; who of God is made
unto

unto all that believe in him, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

A deep conviction of guilt and misery doth certainly lie at the root of this important change. The sinner seeth himself to be all pollution, naked, and defenceless, having nothing to screen him from the wrath of that almighty being whom he hath offended. This constrains him to look about for deliverance. The wrath of God is intolerable: he cannot dwell with devouring flames, he cannot lie down in everlasting burnings; and though he is conscious that he hath justly merited this misery, yet self-preservation, that strong principle implanted in his nature by the great author of his being, obligeth him to ask the question, Is there no hope?

Here, indeed, many steal away from under their burden, take shelter in some refuge of lies, and encompass themselves about with sparks of their own kindling: but the sinner that is under the conduct of the Spirit of God, (and of such only I at present speak), the more he considers his case, the more hopeless, and desperate, he

findeth it to be. He indeed asketh the question, What shall I do? but feeling his impotence, answers, I can do nothing; or though I could do any thing, yet what would it avail me?—Can the duty I owe at present make any reparation for the offences that are past?—Will forbearing to contract new debt, intitle me to a discharge of the old? Impossible!—In short, when he casts his eyes abroad throughout the whole creation, he can find nothing at all to lean upon for deliverance. And thus, as the apostle expresseth it, Gal. iii. 23. he is “shut up unto the “faith,” hedged about, as it were, on every side; so that neither himself, nor any other creature, can make a way for his escape.

Being reduced to this condition, he listens with eagerness to the tidings of a Saviour. The name *Jesus* hath a different sound to him than ever it had before; and his very heart leaps within him, when he hears, that “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” But he cannot rest satisfied with a general account of this matter. As his danger is

real

real and pressing, he seeks a clear discovery of the method of deliverance. Felt distress breeds concern and anxiety; a self-condemned criminal cannot quiet his mind with the bare probability of a pardon: he therefore narrowly pries into the authority, the character, and the ability, of the Saviour. He looks into his *commission*, and is wonderfully pleased to read such a plain declaration as this, *Lk. xlii. 6. 7.* "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house."—He rejoiceth to hear the Father himself proclaiming with an audible voice from heaven, first at his baptism, and afterwards at his transfiguration, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He then proceeds to consider his admirable fitness for the office and work of a Saviour, as being the eternal Word made flesh,—Emmanuel,—God in our nature. He reviews the whole history of his actions and sufferings; sees him

him offering up the sacrifice to divine justice; hears him cry on the cross, "It is finished;" beholds him rising from the grave in testimony of the divine acceptance, ascending up on high to receive the kingdom, where he ever liveth to make intercession for transgressors, and to dispense the gifts he purchased with his blood, having all power committed to him in heaven and on earth: from all which he discovers abundant reason to conclude, that "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him."

Having thus found a Saviour exactly suited to his necessities, he now begins to conceive some hope: he sees a possibility of obtaining salvation; and is satisfied, that if this Saviour will undertake his cause, he hath no reason to despair: he therefore anxiously inquires, how, or by what means, he may procure his aid, and be admitted to partake of the blessings he hath purchased.—Here it is that the great adversary usually makes his most vigorous efforts, and puts forth all his force and artifice, to shipwreck the poor soul on the very shore of salvation. He endeavours to make that

conscience

consciousness of guilt, which first brought the sinner to see his need of a Saviour, now to appear an objection against coming to him for deliverance. He will tell him, that though others may be forgiven, yet surely he cannot; that the greatness of his sins, or his long continuance in them, place him beyond the reach of his saving power, or at least render him an improper object for his merciful interposition. Hereby the poor creature is either driven to despair, or else to a vain and fruitless search after something in himself, to recommend him to the Saviour. And the last of these temptations is so adapted to the pride of our nature, which would always have something to boast of, that with many it proves too fatally successful; neither is it soon, nor easily, overcome by any.—But the soul that is guided by the Spirit of God, is here led to see the extent and freedom of the gospel offer and call;—that Jesus is a Saviour for the chief of sinners;—that the wretched, the miserable, the poor, and blind, and naked, are the very persons to whom his gracious invitations and counsels are addressed;—that he interposed for our relief,

not

not, because we were worthy of his aid, but because we needed his aid; and that a sense of extreme need, accompanied with a humble and thankful acceptance of the unspeakable gift of God to men, is all that is looked for on the part of the creature.

Upon this the sinner, renouncing his own righteousnesses as filthy rags, or as it is elsewhere expressed, "having no confidence in the flesh," comes to him, judging and condemning himself, without any plea but his extreme necessity, and the infinite and undeserved mercy of God; having no answer to the law, but the merit of Christ's obedience unto death, nor any other shelter from avenging justice. This is what the apostle, in the verse following my text, calls *receiving the atonement*; because then the sinner is made a partaker of Christ's sacrifice, his peace-speaking blood is sprinkled upon him, and covers him so entirely, that from head to foot, if I may use that expression, no part of him is left exposed to that fiery indignation which shall finally consume all the adversaries of God.

AND now let me ask, who among you can say, that you have experienced such a work of grace upon your hearts?—For the just encouragement of those who are thus reconciled to God by the death of his Son, I shall, in further illustration of the apostle's reasoning, endeavour to shew the powerful influence of the life of Christ upon every thing that belongs to their complete salvation.

1st, The justification of believers, which was purchased by the death of Christ, is rendered sure and permanent by his restored life. Upon this the apostle lays a peculiar emphasis, Rom. viii. 34. where, in support of that triumphant challenge, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" having said, "It is Christ that died," he immediately subjoins, "yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

From whence can a sentence of condemnation proceed? Is it not from that very throne to which our once crucified Redeemer is raised, that he may confer that remission which he purchased with his blood? And now that he is entered into

his glory, shall the indictment that he nailed to his cross be taken down from thence, and put in suit against those who, in obedience to his Father's command, have fled to him for refuge? Impossible! As he bowed his head upon the cross to expiate our guilt, so he lifted it up again when he rose from the grave, that he might effectually apply the merit of his sacrifice, and obviate every charge that could be brought against his people.

Secondly, The life of Christ is no less available to insure the *sanctification* of all who believe on him. For what end did he enter into the heavenly sanctuary, but that from thence he might send forth his conquering Spirit to cleanse and purify the hearts of those whom he had washed with his blood, that as no guilt might be left to provoke the justice of God, so neither should there be any defilement to offend his holiness? It is impossible to doubt, that a Redeemer in glory will at length present to his Father "a glorious church; without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Surely Christ is not gone to heaven, to leave that blood to run waste which he shed upon earth, or to be negligent in improving

improving the virtue of his sacrifice. That prayer, "Father, sanctify them through thy truth," hath as loud a sound from his illustrious throne, as it had from the footstool, when he was just about to enter upon his agony and sufferings. He did not utter these words upon the confines of his kingdom, to forget or disuse them when he should enter upon the possession of it. What he prayed for in his humiliation, he hath power to dispense in his exalted state; and he will do it to all who put their trust in him: he will gradually adorn them with the beauties of holiness, and keep them by his power through faith unto salvation.—Which leads me to observe,

In the *third* place, That the life of Christ doth effectually secure an honourable issue to all the *afflictions* and *temptations* of his people. It is the same person that was crucified on earth, who is now crowned with glory in the highest heavens: and though he dropped the infirmities of that body he had assumed, and left all the weakness of humanity behind him in the grave; yet he carried his pitying nature to the throne, and is still touched with

the feeling of our infirmities, and disposed to help us in every time of need. He "will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." He knows our frame, he remembers that we are dust; and will therefore "debate with us in measure, and stay his rough wind in the day of his east wind."

And with regard to temptations, the life of Christ affords the most comfortable assurance, that over these we shall be finally victorious. He that suffered being tempted, will certainly be disposed to succour those that are tempted, and there can be no room to doubt, that he is as able as he is willing. If while, in the form of a servant, he defeated all the artifices of the cunning serpent, and repelled the most violent attacks of the roaring lion; if in his lowest state of abasement, even while he hung upon the cross, he spoiled principalities and powers, making a shew of them openly; now that all power is committed to him both in heaven and on earth, can he want either wisdom or strength to bruise Satan under the feet of the weakest of his servants? Impossible! — While the head of the body reigns in glory,

glory, we may be well assured, that no
 member can become the prey of any ad-
 verse power; so that every believer may
 adopt the language of Paul, and say as he
 did, "Who shall separate us from the love
 of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress,
 or persecution, or famine, or nakedness,
 or peril, or sword? — Nay, in all these
 things we are more than conquerors,
 through him that loved us. For I am
 persuaded, that neither death, nor life,
 nor angels, nor principalities, nor
 powers, nor things present, nor things
 to come, nor height, nor depth, nor
 any other creature, shall be able to sepa-
 rate us from the love of God, which is in
 Christ Jesus our Lord." — Once more,
 4thly, The life of Christ secures to his
 people the *resurrection* of their bodies, and
 the happiness of the whole man, in the full
 and everlasting enjoyment of God.
 As Adam, by his apostasy, became the
 source of death to all his natural descend-
 ents; so Christ, by his expiatory suffer-
 ings, and the glory that followed, is be-
 come the fountain of life to all his spiritual
 offspring; who accordingly are said to be
 begotten again to the lively hope of an
 inheritance

"inheritance that is incorruptible, and
 "undefiled, and that fadeth not away;"
 and that by means of his resurrection from
 the dead. Hence the second Adam is called
 a quickening Spirit, having the same virtue
 and efficacy to convey all the fulness of life
 to those who are new born into the family
 of God, that the first Adam had to transmit
 death to his posterity. It was not the soul
 of Christ only, but his body also, that was
 exalted, and crowned with honour: in
 like manner shall the bodies of believers
 be rescued from the grave, and raised to
 glory, seeing these were redeemed by Christ
 as well as their souls. Nay, the bodies of
 the saints are said expressly to be "the
 "temples of the Holy Ghost;" and it
 cannot be supposed, that these temples
 shall remain always under the ruins of
 death. He who honoured them with his
 residence, will certainly rebuild them in
 due time; as the apostle reasons, Rom.
 viii. 11. "If the Spirit of him that raised
 "up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you;
 "he that raised up Christ from the dead,
 "shall also quicken your mortal bodies,
 "by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."
 Then shall that song be sung by all the
 redeemed company newly raised from the
 dust,

dust, — "Death is swallowed up in victo-
 ry." — "O death, where is now thy
 sting? O grave, where is now thy victo-
 ry?" — The sting of death was sin, and
 the strength of sin was the law; but
 thanks be unto God, who hath now gi-
 ven us the victory through Jesus Christ
 our Lord."

Thus have I endeavoured to lead you,
 through a very extensive, but surely a
 pleasant and fruitful field, wherein a va-
 riety of objects have occurred, interesting
 to all, and peculiarly comfortable to the
 people of God: upon whom I therefore
 call, in the conclusion of my discourse, to
 praise and magnify that compassionate Sa-
 viour, and faithful High-Priest over the
 house of God, who ransomed them with
 his blood; and amidst all the splendors of
 his exalted state, is not unmindful of his
 charge upon earth, but continually ap-
 pears in the presence of God for them;
 whose ear is always attentive to the voice
 of their supplications; whose mouth is en-
 ver open to plead in their behalf; and as
 if it had not been love enough to die for
 them, still lives and reigns for them, and
 even

even glories in being "the head over all
 " things to the church, which is his body,
 " the fulness of him that filleth all in
 " all."—To him, with the Father, and
 quickening Spirit, the one living and true
 God, be glory and honour, thanksgiving
 and praise, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

*Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any
 more with idols?*
 If we compare the representation here
 given of Ephraim, with the account we
 have of him ch. iv. 17. we shall discover
 such a wonderful change, as must excite
 in us a desire to be acquainted with the
 cause of it. There it is said, "Ephraim
 " is joined to idols: here we behold
 him throwing them away, with every
 symptom of contempt and abhorrence.
 Like a man awakened from a dream, or
 rather like one who had lost his reason, and
 was now restored to the right use of it,
 he saith, What have I to do any more with
 idols?—It is my disgrace, no less than my
 crime, that ever I had any thing to do
 with such lying vanities; but now I cast
 them from me with scorn and detestation,
 and with a determined purpose, that I shall
 never

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S E R M O N — X.

HOSEA, xiv. 8.

Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?

IF we compare the representation here given of Ephraim, with the account we have of him ch. iv. 17. we shall discover such a wonderful change, as must excite in us a desire to be acquainted with the cause of it. There it is said, "Ephraim is joined to idols:" Here we behold him throwing them away, with every symptom of contempt and abhorrence. Like a man awakened from a dream, or rather like one who had lost his reason, and was now restored to the right use of it, he saith, *What have I to do any more with idols?*—It is my disgrace, no less than my crime, that ever I had any thing to do with such lying vanities; but now I cast them from me with scorn and detestation, and with a determined purpose, that I shall

never henceforth return to them any more.

How is this surprising change to be accounted for? When God said, "Ephraim is joined to idols," he immediately pronounced that awful decree, "Let him alone." Hereby a restraint was laid upon every outward instrument. All the creatures were charged by the highest authority to give him no disturbance in the course of his idolatry, but to leave him entirely to his own conduct, and the unabated influence of the idols he had chosen. By what means then was his recovery brought about? — Had Ephraim the honour to discover the delusion by his own sagacity, and to break the enchantment by his own strength? — We find an answer to these questions, ch. xiii. 9. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but IN ME is thy help." Had God said, *I am determined to let Ephraim alone*, there would have been an end of him at once, though the whole creation had been left at liberty to exert its utmost activity for his help: but it deserves our notice, that though God laid a restraint upon the agency of the creatures, yet

yet he laid no restraint upon his own, but reserved to himself the full exercise of his essential and unalienable prerogative, to be the free and sovereign disposer of his grace.

In this character he is introduced at the 1st verse of this chapter, where he issues forth his royal command, and clothes it with power: "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." — In order to encourage their hope of acceptance, he teacheth them in the following verses how to pray, and even dictates the very form of surrender they were to make: "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord, say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the works of our hands, Ye are our Gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." After which, to remove that distrust and jealousy which necessarily spring from a consciousness of guilt, he goes on to declare his sovereign purpose, expressed in the most comprehensive and absolute

terms, of dispensing to them, and confer-
ring upon them, his pardoning mercy and
sanctifying grace: "I will heal them

"backsliding, I will love them freely: for

"mine anger is turned away from him.

"I will be as the dew unto Israel," &c.

In consequence whereof, he foretells, in
the words of my text, that Ephraim, who
till then had been joined to idols, should
find himself disposed and enabled to say,
not with his lips only, but from an ef-
fectual principle of new life in his heart,
What have I to do with idols any more?

From this view of my text, as it stands
connected with other passages in this book
that relate to Ephraim, and more especial-
ly with the verses immediately preceding,
four observations obviously arise, which I
propose to illustrate in the following dis-
course.

1. That a sinner, in his natural state,
is joined to idols.

2. That to separate a sinner from idols,
is a work that is altogether peculiar to God.

3. That this separation is effected by
the discovery, and application, of pardon-
ing mercy, and sanctifying grace.—And,

4. That every one who is a partaker of
these

these important benefits will, and must, adopt the words of Ephraim in their most extensive meaning, and say, as he did, *What have I to do any more with idols?*

I. My first observation is, That a sinner, in his natural state, is joined to idols.

Herein consisteth the essence of man's apostasy. Something that is not God is the object of his supreme love, and possesseth that place in his heart which is due only to the living and true God; and that thing, by what name soever it may be distinguished, is properly an idol. Now this world, and the things of the world, its riches, and pleasures, and honours, which the Apostle John, by a strong and significant figure, calls "the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life;" these are the great rivals of God, which ever since the fatal apostasy have usurped the throne in the human heart.

I am unwilling to mention the profanities by which some of these idols are worshipped by many: they are too shocking to be named, and at the same time so notorious, as to render a detail of them superfluous.

perfluous. It is by no means necessary
 for proving the charge of idolatry, that I
 should lead your imagination through the
 various scenes of injustice, oppression, and
 cruelty; or into the foul haunts of lewd-
 ness and riotous excess. Many of these
 vices may be deemed *unnatural* to man even
 in his fallen state: and though the carnal
 mind be enmity against God, yet I am
 verily persuaded, that the carnal mind it-
 self doth often suffer a considerable degree
 of violence, before it can be fully recon-
 ciled to the practice of them. It is suffi-
 cient for my purpose to affirm, what daily
 observation puts beyond all doubt, viz.
 that this present world, in one shape or o-
 ther, is loved and served in preference to
 God, by every man, without exception,
 who hath no other principle of life than
 what he derived from the first Adam.
 Here he finds the supply of his bodily
 wants, and all that kind of provision that
 suits his animal nature, and gratifies those
 appetites which he hath in common with
 the inferior creatures. And though he is
 often, or rather always, disappointed in
 his expectation; yet being unacquainted
 with any better sustenance than this earth
 affords,

affords, he only makes new experiments, persists in seeking his portion here below, and will continue to do so, till, by some means or other, he get a mind to discern those spiritual objects, and an appetite to relish those spiritual enjoyments, which are the proper food of the soul, the only aliment whereby its real life and well-being can be supported. Hence it already appears, in some measure,

II. THAT to separate a sinner from idols, must be the peculiar work of God himself; which was the second observation I proposed to illustrate.

The natural man, as I just now said, may change the *object* of his devotion; and having experienced the vanity of any particular idol, he may say concerning it, *What have I to do any more with thee?* Such a change as this is abundantly common; it is easy, nay it is necessary: it requires no exertion of strength; weakness itself is sufficient to produce it, being no other than the natural, the unavoidable consequence of satiety and disgust. But amidst ten thousand changes of this kind, the man is only turning from one idol to another;

other: and though he may pass from grosser ones to others more refined; from mere bodily indulgence to the amusements of science, or perhaps from the gratification of selfish and turbulent passions, to the cultivation and practice of some public and social virtues; yet still he stops short of God: all the objects of his pursuit belong to the present state of things; and he aspires to no higher felicity than may be gathered from the materials of this earth which he inhabits.

Accordingly the conversion of a sinner, or the turning him from idols to the true God, is every where throughout the scriptures represented as the effect of omnipotent creating power. It is called a *new creation*, a *being born again*, a *resurrection*, a *passing from death to life*. Nor are these expressions metaphorical, but strictly just; they are the words not of truth only, but of soberness. The apostate creature is really *dead*, in the truest and most important sense of that word. For what is natural death, as it is commonly styled? The soul, when separated from the body, doth not cease to exist; and though the body itself moulders into dust, yet no particle
of

of that dust is annihilated or lost. The principal effect of that humiliating event, is to put an end to the creature's connection with a present world: the man ceases to be any more an inhabitant of this earth; and when we say he is dead, this is all that we commonly mean to express.

Now sin hath broken our connection with the spiritual world, as really as the separation of the soul from the body will break our connection with this material world: and therefore, without any metaphor, sin is the death of the soul or spirit of the man, whereby it is cut off from the source of life, and utterly disabled to relish those employments or pleasures which alone can render a spiritual being happy. And in this state it must remain, till the same power that gave it existence at first, shall create it anew, and restore those faculties which sin had destroyed, of acting and enjoying according to its true and proper nature.

The use of this observation is twofold; *first*, That those who are turned from idols may, with humble gratitude, give God the glory, and cheerfully trust in him for perfecting the change his grace hath begun;

and, *secondly*, That they who are conscious they are still joined to idols, may immediately, and without any circuit, go directly to the fountain of life, even the Father of spirits, who is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto himself, and cry as they can, for new life, from him who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things that be not, as though they were.

But how doth God quicken the dead in trespasses and sins, and separate the sinner from his idols?

III. My third observation is the answer to this question.—He doth it by the discovery and application of his pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace. I join these together, because they are so inseparably connected, that neither of them can exist apart; “for whom God justifies, them he “also sanctifies.” And both of them are expressly mentioned in the context, as the means by which Ephraim should be disposed and enabled to say, *What have I to do any more with idols?*

The discovery of pardoning mercy is the first means employed for working this change. Fear is the immediate consequence

quence of guilt, which soon degenerates into hatred, or that enmity against God which is the distinguishing characteristic of the carnal mind. No sooner had Adam sinned, than he became afraid of his maker, and preposterously endeavoured to flee from his presence. This fear is the natural inheritance of his children. God appears as an enemy to the guilty soul; and so long as he is viewed in that light, it is impossible that he can be the object of its love. But the report of pardoning mercy presents him in a light so suited to the necessities of the apostate creature, that in proportion as it is believed, the sinner is encouraged to look to him with hope. And when the evidence of this report is so fully seen, as to vanquish distrustful tormenting fear; when that blessed record gains entire credit, "that God hath given
 "to us eternal life, and that this life is
 "in his Son," whom he hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, that without staining the honour of his justice, a way might be opened for the free exercise of mercy to the chief of sinners; then God becomes the object both of love and confidence, and appears so

completely amiable, that in comparison of him, those idols which the soul formerly desired, stripped of their delusive charms, are regarded with contempt, nay, renounced with abhorrence. VI

Now, if the believing views of God's pardoning mercy have this effect, how powerful must the experience of it be, when accompanied, as it always is, with his sanctifying grace?—When the soul hath not only seen, but tasted, that the Lord is gracious, and that in him the fatherless findeth mercy;—when God saith, as in vers. 4. “I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away;”—especially when, as it follows, he becomes “as the dew unto Israel,” causing the influences of his Spirit to descend upon the soul, whereby the barren wilderness is turned into a fruitful field;—above all, when the great Lord of the vineyard comes into his garden, to eat his pleasant fruits, or, to drop the allusion, when the soul, washed, and sanctified, and justified, hath experienced the ineffable delights of fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, through the Spirit;—then the victory o-

ver the world is completed, and the person
will be enabled to say without any reserve,
What have I to do any more with idols?

IV. My fourth and last observation was,
That these words of Ephraim, in their
most extensive meaning, will, and must
be adopted, by all, without exception, up-
on whom God hath been pleased to confer
his pardoning mercy, and his sanctifying
grace. For these important blessings are
not only the means by which the sinner is
separated from idols, but they are means
which can never fail to produce the ef-
fects. This happy change is not only
their natural, but their necessary conse-
quence: and therefore, if we be not turn-
ed from idols, however just and orthodox
our speculative opinions concerning these
points may be, it is certain, that we have
not yet tasted that the Lord is gracious:
for thus it is written, Gal. i. 4. that
Christ "gave himself for our sins," ac-
cording to the will of God, "that he
"might deliver us from this present evil
"world;" and it is mentioned as the
distinguishing character and real attain-
ment of all his redeemed ones, Gal. v. 24.

"They that are Christ's, have crucified
to the flesh, with the affections and lusts."

By this time you will have discovered your concern in the subject, and the use you ought to make of it. I have shewed, that man, in his natural state, is joined to idols ;— that it is God alone who can separate him from them ;— and that he doth it by means of his pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace. Now it is by faith in the Redeemer, that any of the children of Adam come to be interested in these great and inestimable benefits. Here then you are furnished with a plain decisive test, whereby you may judge of your Christian profession, and examine yourselves whether you be in the faith. If idols reign with full power in your hearts, the conclusion is unavoidable, that as yet you have neither part nor lot in the Saviour; you are utter strangers both to pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace. On the other hand, though their dominion be taken from them, so that they cannot be said to reign within you, yet in whatever degree their influence remains, you may certainly conclude, that so far your faith must be weak in proportion. Only this is your comfort, that

that he who hath begun the good work, will carry it forward to perfection; for "he is the rock, his work is perfect, and "all his ways are judgement." He who is the author, is likewise the finisher of his people's faith. To him therefore let your humble prayer be addressed. Say to him as the disciples did, "Lord, increase our "faith." And you may do it in the assured hope of being heard; for he hath promised the Spirit to them that ask it. Let us then ask and receive, that our joy may be full.

FROM all that hath been said, we learn
1st, How to account for that idolatry which is so prevalent in the world. While man remained innocent, he had free access to the author of his existence: and being assured of his friendship, he rejoiced in the displays of his glory; and all the creatures he beheld, instead of intercepting or dividing his love, served only to remind him, how much he himself was indebted to the bounty of their creator. But sin introduced a dismal revolution into the heart of man. Alienated from God, and conscious of deserved punishment, we
either

either think not of him at all, or dread him in the tremendous character of a judge and avenger. At the same time, we must have something to gratify our inbred desire of happiness; and finding among the creatures around us, not only the necessary materials for supplying our bodily wants, but likewise a variety of objects and enjoyments suited to the inferior part of our nature, our hearts cleave to them, we pursue them with eagerness, and hope to extract that pleasure from the possession of them, which we despair of finding any where else. — Hence likewise we learn,

2dly, That nothing can avail for the cure of this idolatry, which doth not relieve from the guilt of sin, and vanquish the tormenting fear of wrath, by representing God in a light wherein we can behold him with pleasure; nay, which doth not bring an object in view that outshines a present world, and will afford that kind of happiness which is adapted to the nature, and commensurate to the duration, of an immortal spirit. Reason is, in all respects, unequal to the task. It no doubt can discover, and may descant very plausibly upon the vanity of the creature: but

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alas! a hungry man will feed upon husks rather than starve; nay, reason itself will justify him in doing so. Something must be presented to him of real worth and excellence; something that can supply all his wants, and render him contented and happy, independent of the objects and enjoyments of sense. It must likewise be something attainable; and which, when once obtained, cannot be taken from him.

Upon the whole, then, we see, in the 3d place, the importance and use of faith in Christ.—The sacrifice he offered lays a firm foundation for the hope of pardon to the chief of sinners. There we see sin condemned in the flesh, the law infinitely glorified, and the justice of the law-giver, not only receiving full satisfaction, but more illustriously displayed, and more highly exalted, by the sufferings of his own Son in our nature, than it could have been by the final condemnation and everlasting punishment of the whole apostate posterity of Adam. This hath an obvious and powerful tendency to remove those fears which necessarily spring from a sense of guilt: for when we discover a way in which God may righteously pardon the

sinner, then we can look up to him with hope; we are no longer compelled to flee from his presence; the revelation of mercy and forgiveness invites our approach to him, and thereby weakens one of the strongest of those cords that bind us to a present world:—Especially when, to the intrinsic worth and value of Christ's sacrifice, we add, that it was offered up in consequence of a divine appointment; for "Christ glorified not himself to be made an high-priest, but he who said unto him, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." This strikes at the very root of all distrust and jealousy. When we are well assured, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life;" what stronger evidence could the most suspicious mind require of his merciful nature, and kind regards to the children of men? Doth not this astonishing act of grace, this *unspeakable gift*, unmerited, and even unsolicited, amount to a full demonstration of what the Apostle John repeatedly asserts, *viz.* God is LOVE. Can any one that believes this,

this, hesitate for a moment to draw the same conclusion from it that Paul did, Rom. viii. 32. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—And this leads me to observe, that Christ's giving himself for our sins, according to the will of God, hath a mighty efficacy to separate us from idols, not only by laying a solid foundation for our hope of pardon, and representing the Father in such a light as cannot fail to vanquish that fear and jealousy which render the thoughts of him painful and alarming to the sinner; but further, by giving us the animating prospect, and the fullest assurance, of that incorruptible inheritance, which our great Redeemer hath purchased with his blood, and promised to bestow upon all without exception, who, acknowledging the original forfeiture, and the justice of the sentence which condemns them to die, are willing to receive new life from his hand, and to hold it by his right, as a free gift to them, through the merit of his obedience unto death in their place. This world, as I

as it is, will still appear of some importance to men, so long as they are unacquainted with any thing better. It is this that renders death the *king of terrors*; and they who cannot look with comfort beyond the grave, will not only cleave to a present world, but will even submit to the most grievous hardships and inconveniences, rather than consent to the dissolution of these earthly tabernacles: "Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life." Nothing can reconcile us to a removal from this world, but the discovery of another, where we shall continue to live, and to partake of enjoyments preferable to any of those we leave behind us. Now, for this discovery we are wholly indebted to the Lord Jesus Christ. Life and immortality are brought to light by his gospel. This great object darkens the delusive lustre of all seen things. What hath this earth to offer that can stand the least comparison with that fulness of joy which is at God's right hand? Animated by this prospect, the believing Hebrews took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves, that in heaven they had a better and more enduring

"substance."

“substance.” They did not regret the loss of those perishing trifles, for which carnal men contend with such eager and unremitting labour: they looked beyond them to permanent and substantial blessings; and rejoiced in the hope, “that when the earthly house of this tabernacle should be dissolved, they had a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”—But I must here add, that all these discoveries, which have so obvious a tendency to separate us from idols, derive their virtue and efficacy from that divine Spirit which Christ purchased by his sufferings, and obedience unto death; whose office it is, not only to throw light upon the great truths revealed in the gospel, and to open or unveil our eyes, that we may see them in all their evidence, but likewise to carry them home into our hearts with such demonstration and power, that they shall become the type or mould wherein that new man is formed, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. By this divine agent, we are born into the kingdom and family of God; and are connected with the spiritual world as really,

“consistently” as

as, by our natural birth we were introduced into and connected with this material world. In consequence whereof, we become sons, not in name only, but in nature; and, as St. Paul reasons, upon a principal universally admitted, "If sons, then
 " are we also heirs, heirs of God, and
 " joint heirs with Christ Jesus." This powerful renovation pulls down at once every idol from the throne, and lays them all under the feet of the "man in Christ;" for every thing tends to the place of its original. "They that are after the flesh,
 " do mind the things of the flesh; and
 " they that are after the spirit, the things
 " of the spirit:"—"They have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, whereby they
 " know the things that are freely given
 " them of God." And these they find to be a portion sufficient to fill the most enlarged capacity of their souls. Being risen with their Lord, they "seek the things
 " which are above, where Christ sitteth at
 " the right hand of God." They are dead to whatsoever is confined to their present state of existence; and the new life they have received, being "hid
 " with

"with Christ in God," they are enabled to conclude, with the most absolute certainty, "that when he who is their life shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory, and ever after be with the Lord."

"MAY he who at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine into all your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ," that each of you may be disposed and enabled to say, *What have I to do any more with idols?* And let those who have experienced the power of divine grace, shew, by their future conduct, that they find enough in their God and Saviour to render them completely happy, and that the draught they have got of the pure water of life, hath effectually quenched their thirst after the muddy pools of earthly enjoyments.

Beware, O Christians! of every thing that may sully your profession, or grieve the Spirit, and thereby breed in you a distrust of your personal interest in God's pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace: for it is "by faith you stand," and in the same

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same proportion that your faith fails, idols will regain their influence in your hearts. I shall therefore conclude with that affectionate exhortation of the Apostle Jude, "Ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Amen.

Among the various motives to the love and practice of universal holiness, with which this sacred epistle abounds, the one I have now read to you doth certainly merit peculiar attention; and must, to every ingenuous mind, appear not only most persuasive, but likewise most animating. For who that hath any thirst for true glory, would not aspire to the high dignity of becoming a "worker-together" with the Son of God? Or can any man have reason to entertain the least doubt of victory and triumph, who is engaged in a cause which the great Lord of heaven and earth hath undertaken to support?

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JOHN, iii. 8.

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

AMong the various motives to the love and practice of universal holiness with which this sacred epistle abounds, the one I have now read to you doth certainly merit peculiar attention; and must, to every ingenuous mind, appear not only most persuasive, but likewise most animating. For who that hath any thirst for true glory, would not aspire to the high dignity of becoming a “worker-together” with the Son of God? Or can any man have reason to entertain the least doubt of victory and triumph, who is engaged in a cause which the great Lord of heaven and earth hath undertaken to support?

1. I propose therefore, in the first place, to offer a few remarks for establishing your faith of the important doctrine contained in my text;

2. Secondly, I shall give you some account of the principal means by which the Son of God hath hitherto conducted his salutary undertaking, and shall finally destroy the works of the devil. And then direct you to the practical improvement of the subject.

I. First, then, that you may see the evidence by which the doctrine here asserted is confirmed and illustrated, in the clearest and most satisfying light, I shall lay before you the several parts of it, in the same method and order of time in which the Spirit of God hath placed them in the sacred scriptures,

If we look back to the Old-Testament writings, we shall find this doctrine published in paradise immediately after the apostasy of our first parents, when Satan's usurped domination commenced. Then it was, that God said unto the serpent, "Because thou hast done this, I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and

"and between thy seed and her seed: It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This was an early intimation of a Saviour, who should defeat the malice of Satan, the grand adversary, and prevent the total ruin of mankind.

To prefigure the manner in which he was to achieve this great deliverance, it deserves our notice, that expiatory sacrifices were very early appointed. Thus we read, that "Abel offered unto the Lord the firstlings of his flock:" and when we consider, that it was not till after the deluge that the use of animal food was permitted to man, we can hardly doubt, that the "coats of skins," which God is said to have made for Adam and Eve, must have been the skins of animals offered in sacrifice by his own direction and appointment. These were significant emblems, or types, of that great atonement which Christ was to make in due time by the sacrifice of himself; in allusion to which, he is styled, in the New-Testament writings, *a lamb*, "the lamb of God," "the lamb slain from the foundation of the world." But lest these typical representations of

the promised ~~Jesus~~ should prove too thick and obscure a veil, it pleased AGod gradually to unfold the purposes of his grace, by raising up prophets at different periods of time; who, though they separately bare witness to this illustrious person, yet they perfectly agreed in the report they gave of him; representing him as an invincible conqueror, "who should divide the spoil with the strong,"—as "the King whom God had set upon his holy hill of Zion,"—as "the Lord strong in battle," and "mighty to save;"—who should "proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound;"—who should "finish transgression, and make an end of sins, or of-ferings for sin, "and make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness."

Accordingly, when the fulness of time was come, the Son of God made his entrance into the world in the declared character of a Saviour and Redeemer. A heavenly herald was employed to announce his appearance, and to appoint him a name expressive of his office: "Thou shalt call his name *Jesus*," said the angel to Joseph, "for

"for he shall save his people from their
 "sins." A special messenger was raised
 up to prepare the way before him, to bid
 Satan defiance, and to call upon men to
 "repent, because the kingdom of God
 "was at hand." This was John, who
 soon after had the honour to introduce
 Christ by baptism into the field of battle,
 and to point him out to the men of that
 age as "the Lamb of God which taketh
 "away the sin of the world."

And now let us review his personal con-
 duct, and trace him through the course
 of his public ministry, where we shall be-
 hold the most striking proofs of the a-
 postle's assertion, that for *this purpose the*
Son of God was manifested, that he might de-
stroy the works of the devil. No sooner is
 he baptized, and consecrated to his office
 by the visible descent of the Holy Ghost,
 than he suffers himself to be "led by the
 "spirit into the wilderness," and conti-
 nued there for the space of forty days
 "tempted of the devil." The circum-
 stances of this combat, and the happy is-
 sue of it, are recorded by three evangelists,
 and are so generally known, that I need
 not stay to repeat them. This was the
 first

first signal defeat of the adversary: in the wilderness was the serpent's head broken as *tempter*, which on Calvary was afterwards bruised as *tormentor*.

Having thus vanquished the devil in single fight, our Lord forthwith invites men to fight under his banner. He chooseth twelve apostles, whom he appoints to be the stated attendants upon his person, and the principal leaders of the army under him. With these he joins seventy of a subordinate rank, to whom he gives orders to attack the enemy, and to exercise the power of his word and spirit against him. In obedience to his command, and relying upon his aid, they resolutely go forth, two by two, into every city and place whither he himself was to come; and after a rapid and most successful progress, like young soldiers flushed with their first prosperous adventure, they return again with joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name."

Upon this the hotter part of the war begins. The old serpent puts forth all his strength and cunning, raiseth up enemies from every quarter, works upon the pride, envy, and prejudices of the Jewish rulers
and

and teachers, and by their agency carries on a most furious persecution against him. Yet still this great captain of salvation maintains his ground, and, amidst all the opposition that is made to him, lays the foundation of a kingdom, against which the gates of hell shall never be able to prevail; till at length, by seeming to yield, he gives the enemy the mortal blow, pursues him into his own dominions, and, by a mysterious wisdom, "through death, he conquers him that had the power of death, that is the devil: And having thus obtained a complete victory, he riseth from the grave in triumph, ascends up on high, leading captivity captive; where, seated on the right hand of the Father, he shall continue in the exercise of government as Mediator, till all his enemies be made his footstool.

Thus, you see, that the doctrine of my text doth not lean upon a single testimony, but is supported by many clear and express declarations of holy writ, and beautifully illustrated by the whole of our Saviour's conduct during the time of his abode on this earth.—Let us then proceed,
II.

II. In the second place, to consider more particularly some of the principal means by which *the Son of God* hath hitherto conducted his salutary undertaking, and shall finally *destroy the works of the devil*.

1st. He hath given us the most certain and enlarged discoveries of every thing that is necessary to be known, believed, or done by us, in order to our present improvement in holiness, and the perfection of our happiness in a future state.

The devil is styled "the god of this world, who blindeth the minds of those that believe not;" and by keeping the light from them, leads them captive at his pleasure. And Christ delivers them from this thralldom, by "opening their eyes," and turning them from darkness to "light;" dispelling those clouds of ignorance, error, and prejudice, whereby Satan maintains his usurpation over the hearts of men.

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." To him we are indebted for the fullest and most satisfying information concerning the nature and perfections of God

Most High; the measures of his go-
 vernment, his relation to us, and the
 worship that is due to him: and that nei-
 ther guilt nor distance might discourage
 our approach to the throne of his holiness,
 Christ hath opened to us, in his own blood,
 a precious fountain of sovereign virtue, in
 which the chief of sinners may wash, and
 be made clean; and by revealing to us the
 mysterious union of the divine and human
 natures, in his own person as Mediator,
 he hath, as it were, thrown a bridge over
 that boundless infinite ocean, which sepa-
 rates the creature from the invisible God-
 head: so that through the man Christ Je-
 sus, who is also God's beloved Son, we
 may now address the Father of our spirits,
 without that dread of a repulse, and fear of
 offending him, which otherwise must have
 overwhelmed our minds. He hath given
 us a law which is holy, just, and good;
 utterly subversive of the kingdom of Sa-
 tan, and contrary to all his works;
 teaching us, that denying ungodliness,
 and worldly lusts, we should live sober-
 ly, and righteously, and godly, in this
 present world. This law he hath en-
 forced with the most persuasive arguments,

Every motive to obedience that can either encourage our hopes, or alarm our fears, is set before us in the strongest and most affecting light. Heaven is unfolded to our view, and destruction hath no covering: And that no incitement may be wanting to invigorate our opposition to the devil and his works, this great captain of salvation solemnly inlists us into his army by baptism; and hath appointed the other sacrament, not merely to represent his atoning sacrifice, and to remind us of the price with which we were redeemed, but likewise to afford us an opportunity of recognising his title to our grateful homage and most loyal subjection; and to be a means of imparting to our souls those supplies of grace, which will enable us to quit ourselves like men, while we fight under his banner against the powers of darkness, till the God of peace shall in due time bruise Satan underneath our feet. Thus doth *the Son of God destroy the works of the devil*, by the doctrines, and laws, and ordinances he hath taught us. To which I add, *2dly*, The bright and glorious example of his life.

It was the just reproach of the Jewish teachers, that "they bound heavy burdens, and laid them upon other mens shoulders, but they themselves would not touch them with one of their fingers."—Whereas the example of our Lord was of equal perfection with his laws. He lived as he taught; and the whole of his conduct, from his birth to his death, was one continued lecture of the purest devotion, the sublimest morals, and the most extensive usefulness. But this opens a field too extensive to be entered upon. It must suffice at present to observe, that the principal virtues which the peculiar character and circumstances of our Lord gave him an opportunity to practise, were obviously adapted to counteract the devils most favourite vices.—How odious, how disgraceful, do human pride and vain-glory appear, when set in opposition to the lowliness of Christ, who, "though he was in the form of God," "and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant."—With what persuasive eloquence doth the contempt he poured

upon the riches, and honours, and pleasures of this world, reprove and condemn the covetousness, the ambition, and sensuality of men?—His condescension to the mean; and his sympathy with the miserable; his meekness in receiving and forgiving injuries; and his patience in enduring the most grievous sufferings, do all serve to expose the deformity of those opposite distempers which give Satan so much room in the hearts of most men. After this manner doth the perfect example of the Son of God in our nature contribute to the subversion of the kingdom of darkness. But,

3dly, It was by his obedience unto death that our Lord did most eminently *destroy the works of the devil*; as we learn from the passage to which I formerly alluded, Heb. ii. 14. "Through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil." Accordingly, in the epistle to the Colossians, the cross of Christ is compared to a triumphal chariot, on which, having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly. I shall therefore discourse at greater length upon this head, and endeavour to illustrate the efficacy

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efficacy of Christ's death, in counteracting and defeating the malice of Satan, 1. as it advances the glory of God, which he sought to impair; and, 2. as it purchase and secures the salvation of men, in spite of all his attempts to ruin them.

These subjects, which are no less delightful than interesting, will serve to unfold the meaning of that heavenly anthem with which angels celebrated the birth of our Lord: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men."

I. First, then, let us view the death of Christ as a means of advancing the glory of God, or, to speak with greater propriety, of displaying it more fully to his intelligent creatures.

Satan, no doubt, triumphed in his victory over the heads of our race. He had seen with envy that fountain of beneficence flowing out towards them, which he knew was eternally shut against himself; and beheld, with vexation and rage, the complacency and delight of the creator in his new-made world. But now that the fatal trespass was committed, he would fondly conclude, that this blessed harmony between

tween heaven and earth was for ever at an end. Man, would he think, is become no less guilty than I am. That tremendous justice, the severity of which I feel, stands as much in the way of this creature's happiness as of mine. God must rear up another world before he can make any further display of his goodness, for this world is effectually put beyond the reach of it. — Thus we may suppose him glorying in his conquest, and his fancied disappointment of the divine purpose.

But, behold! by the death of Christ, the shameful disappointment recoiling upon himself. He had before seen goodness and justice displayed alternately, each acting in the most perfect manner upon their proper objects: but now he sees them ministering to each others glory, and mutually conspiring to take advantage of his malice, that both might shine forth with more dazzling splendor. He sees mercy to the guilty (an exercise of goodness which till then he thought impossible) rejoicing against judgement, and judgement at the same time triumphing in a satisfaction of infinitely greater worth than the whole world of angels and men. He sees
love

love bringing the sacrifice to satisfy justice; and justice, having nothing more to demand, giving place to love; nay, becoming bound to serve the purposes of love, in the salvation of those whom it formerly sought to destroy. This is that mysterious object which angels contemplate with increasing wonder, and which devils must look at with shame and confusion. The Son of God suffers that the sinner may escape; and thus mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, which are never to meet upon those apostate spirits, meet and embrace upon the cross of Christ; and God appears infinitely just, as well as infinitely gracious, when he justifies those who believe in Jesus.

In short, all the attempts of Satan to impair or darken the glory of God, serve only to furnish out a theatre for the more illustrious display of it. He pulls down his kingdom with his own hands, and builds up that which he meant to overturn. It is impossible to know with certainty what views he had of the Messiah; but it is plain, that he thought his death would bring great advantage to himself. He very probably hoped, that by this hor-

rid deed, God would be provoked finally to abandon the human kind. The Jews were the only society of true worshippers upon earth, the people whom God had chosen for his peculiar inheritance; and if their charter could be broken, by their ungrateful rejection, and barbarous murder, of their long-promised King, then of course they would fall to his share; and so the whole world would become his own, and God have no tribute of praise from men. But, O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! Here again Satan is caught in his own snare; and by seeking to enlarge his kingdom, saps the foundation of it. Christ being lifted up on the cross, draws all men unto him. The covenant of peculiarity doth indeed cease; but then it is succeeded by a better and more extensive one. The wall of partition that inclosed the Jews, and separated them from the rest of the world, is now broken down; and the divine goodness, which formerly ran in a narrow channel, now dilates itself, and embraceth a whole world, men of all kindreds, nations, and languages. Thus Satan, by overdoing, undoes his interest; by grasping

grasping at the Jews, he loveth his Heathen subjects: for, as Paul writes to the Ephesians, chap. ii. 13. 14. "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off," (being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise) "are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us."—"Now therefore," as it follows, vers. 19. "ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Christ, after his resurrection, sent forth his apostles to preach the gospel to every creature. In obedience to his command, they flew abroad like lightning, invaded the kingdom of darkness on all quarters, and made an amazing progress in their own day. And we look by faith for still more glorious times, when the dominion of Satan shall be utterly subverted, and all the nations of the earth shall be brought to the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, whom to know is life eternal. Thus doth the death

of Christ *destroys the works of the devil*, inasmuch as it displays the glory of all the divine perfections, and enlarges the kingdom of God among men, by those very means which Satan employed to *fully* the one, and to *diminish* the other.

2. The death of Christ is no less effectual to purchase and secure the salvation of men, in spite of all Satan's attempts to ruin them. This partly appears from what hath been already suggested. His blood is the price which redeems the soul; it expiates the guilt of sin, and gives full satisfaction to divine justice: so that now the grand obstacle is removed, which obstructed the sinner's access to God, and excluded him from any share in the fruits of his beneficence. But this is not all: The death of Christ doth likewise afford the most persuasive and effectual motives to that holiness, "without which no man shall see God," and thus directly *destroys the works of the devil*. Here we behold the frightful aspect of sin. Hell itself doth not furnish such an awful representation, either of its intrinsic malignity, nor its heinous demerit. How deep, how black, must that stain have been, which nothing could

could wash away but the blood of Christ?—How deadly the disease which no other medicine could cure?—How tremendous that justice, which nothing less could satisfy than the death of him who created the worlds? In vain doth Satan tempt us to *presume*, if we duly attend to this. Here sin is made to appear exceeding sinful; and Christ from the cross proclaims God's infinite abhorrence of that accursed thing, and his resolution to punish it with a louder and more alarming voice, than even the howlings of the damned themselves can do.—And then, what an effectual remedy have we here against *despair*? This is another engine which the enemy of our souls seldom fails to employ. When he cannot hold us bound with the cords of presumption, he will next attempt to plunge us into the gulf of despair, and will be ready to say to us, (as Joshua said to the Jews with a very different aim); "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God." Your sins are so multiplied, and your bad habits so strong, that it is a vain thing to think of amending now. But the words of Christ suggest to the believer a sufficient answer to this objection.

jection. True it is, can he say, that my sins have been many and great; but here is blood that "cleanseth from all sin." My corrupt passions are indeed strong; but then my Redeemer is "mighty to save." He would not purchase an inheritance for me, which I could not be rendered capable of possessing. He who died to prepare a heaven for his people, is certainly able to prepare his people for heaven. He knows my weakness, and yet calls upon me to follow him; and therefore I cannot, I dare not, despair of his help. I will go forward in his name, and he will make his grace sufficient for me. Thus doth the death of Christ destroy the works of the devil, inasmuch as it furnisheth his people with the strongest arguments against sin, and the most persuasive motives to faith and holy obedience; and hath moreover merited for them that supernatural assistance, by which they are encouraged to attempt, nay, (as the Apostle Paul assures us from his own experience), by which they are actually enabled to do all things. — Which leads me to mention a *Fourth* and principal means, by which
the

The Son of God destroys the works of the devil; namely, the divine efficacy of the Holy Spirit, regenerating the souls of men, filling them with light, and love, and strength; casting down those proud imaginations which exalt themselves against God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. The Holy Spirit is Christ's vicegerent upon earth, sent forth by him to supply his place, and to erect his throne in the hearts of men, upon the ruins of Satan's kingdom. This he doth, by opening their understandings to understand the scriptures, and leading them to the knowledge of all necessary truths; by convincing them of their sin and misery, enlightening their minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing their wills, whereby he not only persuades, but effectually enables them to embrace Christ as he is offered; by shedding abroad the love of God in their hearts; furnishing them with strength to resist temptations, to overcome the world, to mortify the deeds of the body, and to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts.— These are some of the effects which the scriptures attribute to the Spirit of

of Christ. By these the strong man armed is driven out of his palace; he is stripped of his armour, and his goods are spoiled. Thus the soul is rescued from the bondage of Satan; and the sinner is made willing, by a day of power, to yield himself unto God, and to walk in newness of life. *So* *boldly*, *The Son of God* will finally *destroy the works of the devil*, when he shall come the second time to judge the world in righteousness. Then shall the kingdom of darkness be plucked up by the roots; then shall the ransomed of the Lord be confirmed in a state of unchangeable purity and happiness. Satan shall no more vex and seduce them; but he, with all the workers of iniquity, shall be thrust down into those everlasting burnings, which the wrath of God, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle and enflame; the smoke whereof ascendeth for ever and ever.

Thus have I illustrated the doctrine of my text, and taken notice of some of the principal means by which *the Son of God* hath hitherto conducted the war against Satan, and shall finally *destroy the works*

~~of the devil:~~ And now, in the review of
 all that hath been said, let us, in the
 best place, praise and magnify our great
 deliverer, who came into the world upon
 so merciful an errand. "O the height
 and depth, the breadth and the length,
 of the love of Christ!" It might justly
 have been feared, that if the Son of God
 was to visit this earth, it would have been
 for a very different end, even to display
 the glory of divine justice, by executing
 vengeance upon those ungrateful creatures
 who had risen up in rebellion against the
 God that made them. But behold, and
 wonder! he came to save, and not to des-
 troy. "For God sent not his Son into the
 world to condemn the world, but that
 the world through him might be saved."
 Nay, he came to destroy those enemies
 who had vanquished us, and to rescue us
 out of their hands. "Lord, what is man
 that thou art mindful of him." My
 brethren, however coldly we may think
 or talk of these matters, angels, whom
 they less concern, contemplate them
 with glee. They shouted for joy when
 the world was made, but they raise a
 higher note to celebrate the redemption of
 mankind,

mankind. And shall men be silent while angels sing? O let us contend with those blessed spirits in the praises of our own Redeemer: He is their Lord, but he is our Saviour. Let our souls, and all that is within us, be stirred up to bless him; and let us even at this distance begin that grateful triumphant song, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

2dly, This doctrine yields the strongest consolation to every sincere Christian. He is engaged in a cause that must prevail; he follows a leader whom no might can withstand; he contends with a subdued and vanquished foe, who hath already received the mortal wound, and ere long shall be cast down, and trampled under his feet. And will not this inspire you with courage and fortitude? You fight under a general whom Satan feareth; and though he useth every artifice to make others unbelievers, yet he himself believes, and trembles. Remember the battles and victories of your Redeemer: consider the vir-

tue of his blood, and the efficacy of his Spirit. Let faith behold him in his present exaltation at the Father's right hand, pleading your cause, and observing your conduct; covering your heads, and healing your wounds; while he prepares for you those crowns of glory that shall never fade away: and then cry out, with the apostle, in holy triumph, "If God be for us, who shall be against us?"—"Who shall separate us from the love of God?" "shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all those things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."—Be bold, O Christians! in the cause of righteousness. Let the wicked blush; they have reason to do so; their work is base, and their wages deadly: but surely the disciples of Jesus have no cause to be ashamed, whether they consider the nature of their service, or the reward that attends it. And what a reproach is it, that the slaves of Satan should act more vigorously for their master, than we do for ours? Their cause is not only bad in itself, but desperate too, as to any prospect of success: whereas the interest

for which we contend, is so just and honourable, that the very attempting to support it is glorious; and unless we were to suppose, that omnipotence may become weak, and the creator be overmatched by the workmanship of his own hands, we are sure of victory. What then should we fear? Be strong, O believers! and of good courage; you fight the battles of the Lord of hosts; and greater is he that is with you, than all that can be against you. Say not that you are the sons of the Most High, and born from above, unless you can prove your descent, by daring to be holy in spite of devils and men. The battle may be hot, but it cannot last long. Death will soon come, and tell you, that your warfare is accomplished; and angels, who now minister to you with joy, will carry you home in triumph to your father's house; and the Redeemer, by whose blood and Spirit you overcome, will put the crown upon your heads, and "grant unto you to sit with him in his throne, even as he also overcame, and is set down with the Father in his throne."

gally, The stability of the gospel-church is a necessary consequence of the doctrine
in

in my text: Zion's King shall have a seed to serve him as long as sun and moon endure. The church he hath purchased with his blood is built upon a rock, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. The Heathen may rage, and the people imagine vain things. The kings of the earth may set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. But he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision; and at length he shall speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. The proudest of his enemies shall lick the dust, when he ariseth to plead the cause that is his own: and therefore his people may well rejoice under the heaviest pressure of affliction, and look by faith through the darkest cloud, to the complete redemption of Israel from all his troubles. For "Jerusalem shall be a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth should be gathered together against it."

1772, This important subject suggests a variety of useful instructions to all who bear office in the church of Christ; and more especially to those who labour in word and doctrine*. To us is committed the ministry of reconciliation, that by the manifestation of the truth as it is in Jesus, the eyes of sinners may be opened, and they turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. We are commanded "to preach the word, to be instant in season and out of season, to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

This, my Fathers and Brethren, is the great aim of the sacred office we bear; to which, not our public ministrations only, but every part of our conduct, ought to

* Preached at the opening of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1772.

be subservient. Let us keep this aim continually in our eye, as a lamp to our feet, and a light unto our path; and in particular, let us place it full in our view when we are assembled together in the name of our Lord, to deliberate and judge in matters which belong to his spiritual kingdom; remembering, that as all our authority is derived from him, so the exercise of that authority can be no further valid, than as it is regulated by his will, and subordinated to *the purpose for which the Son of God was manifested*; and consequently, that every act and decision of an opposite tendency, shall be finally disowned and reprobated by him, who *came to destroy the works of the devil.* Amen.

“Give”
 “ledging of the truth; and that they
 “may recover themselves out of the snare
 “of the devil, who are taken captive by
 “him as his will.”
 This, my Brethren and Brethren, is the
 great aim of the sacred office we bear; to
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S E R M O N XII

PHILIPPIANS, 1. 27.

Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.

IT will be to little purpose to inquire what kind of *conversation becometh the gospel of Christ*, till we be satisfied, in the first place, that this charge, which was originally addressed to the Philippians, may, with equal propriety, be addressed to us.

The qualifying particle **ONLY**, with which the apostle introduces the exhortation, plainly denotes, that, in his own judgement, the demand he made was no less moderate than it was just: *Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.* This is all I require; and you cannot with decency ask, nor in reason hope, that less should be accepted. To this conclusion he was naturally led by the character and circumstances of those to whom he wrote.

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His epistle was inscribed, not to unbelieving Jews or Gentiles, but to *saints in Christ Jesus*, to men who had been converted to the Christian faith, as we learn from the foregoing part of the chapter. And it is material to observe, that as Christianity had been treated with peculiar indignity at Philippi, where Paul and his companion Silas were, by order of the magistrates, publicly scourged, and cast into prison, therefore the profession of the gospel, in such a place, was justly intitled to the most favourable construction: for nothing less than a deep conviction of its truth and excellence, could be supposed to have induced any inhabitant of that city, to profess a religion that inevitably exposed him to those contemptuous, as well as painful sufferings, which a generous and feeling mind would, of all others, most anxiously wish to avoid.

Surely, then, the apostle could have no reason to suspect, that a demand so moderate would either offend or surprise them: *Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.*— You have embraced the faith of the gospel, and continue to make an open confession of it, without any allurements

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lurements of a temporal nature, nay, in the face of the most obvious and alarming discouragements; and therefore, as there can be no room to call in question either your belief of its doctrines, or your regard to its laws, I may, without presumption, hope to obtain your consent, when I only exhort you to act a consistent and uniform part, by suiting your conversation to the religion you have chosen, and have the fortitude to avow.

It is true, and it ought to be gratefully acknowledged, that our present situation in these lands is very different from that of the ancient Philippians. Christianity, as reformed from the corruptions of Popery, is the established religion of our country: so that if a man believe the gospel of Christ, he may, with the most perfect safety to his person and property, make as public a confession of his faith as he inclines. But it is equally true, that no man is compelled by the terrors of persecution to profess Christianity, if he do not believe it; nay, the profession of incredulity itself, if it break not forth into blasphemy, aggravated by sedition, doth not always prove an insurmountable bar

our peace and to our honour.

in the way to any office, civil or military, which the person is otherwise qualified to fill, or hath interest to obtain: And therefore, though the mere profession of Christianity be not attended with any temporal inconveniencies, yet as the want of such profession doth not exclude a man from any temporal advantages, and as neither the profession nor practice of Christianity can be said, in the ordinary course of things, to help any man forward in the line of worldly promotion; hence it follows, that every baptized person, who hath not openly renounced "the Lord that bought him," but still retains the name of *Christian*, and would complain of abuse and injury if his title to that appellation were either denied or called in question, must be considered as acting from the freest choice in the profession he makes; and can have no reason to be startled, far less to be offended, when we address him in the words of this holy apostle, *Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.*—Should it be otherwise with any of us, the consequences are obvious; and upon every supposition we can make, must prove equally fatal to our peace and to our honour.

If we believe not the gospel, why do we profess it? To lie in any case is shameful, how great soever the temptation may be; but to lie deliberately without any temptation at all, which, as I just now observed, is the present case; nay, to persist in that lie from day to day, when telling the truth could not hurt nor endanger any secular interest whatsoever, is a baseness the most superfluous, and consequently the most contemptible, that can possibly be imagined.

On the other hand, if we truly believe what we profess, what an odious, as well as disgraceful appearance, must we make, when our conversation is such as doth not become the gospel of Christ? By "holding the truth in unrighteousness," and counteracting the dictates of religion, and the conviction of our own minds, we expose ourselves to the lashes of that self-reproach which will not fail to occupy every lucid interval betwixt the tumultuous gratifications of passion and appetite; while at the same time, by continuing to profess that gospel we counteract, we every day publish our shame and misery to the world around us, and virtually confess, that we

are

are guilty and self-condemned before all who have an opportunity of observing our conduct.

So that the subject of my text is one of the most important that can employ our attention, as our practical regard to this demand of the apostle is absolutely necessary to preserve the peace and purity of our own hearts, and to support that character which the most profligate reverence, and which all who can discern real beauty and excellence will covet to possess. I mean the venerable character of an *upright man*.

Having thus prepared the way, by shewing, that the same charge which was primarily addressed to the Philippians, may, with strict justice and propriety, be extended to us, let us now proceed to examine, with attention and candour, the standard to which our conformity is enjoined, or, in other words, let us inquire into that *gospel of Christ* to which our conversation, that is, the whole of our external conduct, as expressing the inward temper of our hearts, ought to be suited.

Among the various particulars included in the gospel of Christ, the two following

S E R M O N X I I

may be selected as the most distinguishing and comprehensive, namely,

I. The *Doctrines* we are taught to believe; and,

II. The *Laws* we are commanded to obey.

Each of these particulars I shall examine apart; from whence we shall discover, with ease and certainty, what manner of conversation it is that may be said to become the gospel of Christ.

I. I BEGIN with the *Doctrines* of the gospel, or the truths we are taught to believe. And without descending to the peculiar tenets, or modes of expression, by which Christians of any denomination have chosen to distinguish themselves, I shall confine myself entirely to those capital points, in which the sober and intelligent of almost every denomination will be found to agree.

Now the *gospel*, strictly so called, or that "word of reconciliation," the substance whereof the apostle hath elsewhere expressed in one short sentence, to wit, "That God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses

"trespasses unto them," necessarily supposes, that man is in a state of distance and alienation from God, liable to punishment in consequence of his apostasy; and so perverted and enfeebled, that he hath neither the disposition nor the ability to do any thing that can be effectual for his own recovery.

It informs us, that "God, who spared not the angels that sinned, but hath reserved them in everlasting chains under darkness to the judgement of the great day," so pitied the human race, "that he sent his only begotten Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."—The nature and dignity of this great deliverer are thus described by an inspired apostle, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." This "Word," adds he, "was made flesh, and dwelt" or tabernacled "among men."—He who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself

"self of no reputation, took upon him
 "the form of a servant, and was made in
 "the likeness of men; and being found
 "in fashion as a man, he humbled him-
 "self, and became obedient unto death,
 "even the death of the cross."—This
 death is uniformly represented by all the
 New-Testament writers as an atoning sac-
 rifice for the sins of men." Hence Christ
 is styled "the Lamb of God which taketh
 away the sin of the world." He is said
 to "have borne our sins in his own body
 "on the tree," and "to have made peace
 "by the blood of his cross;" to have
 "been made sin for us who knew no sin,
 "that we might be made the righteous-
 "ness of God in him;" and "to have
 "suffered, the just for the unjust, that he
 "might bring us to God." The Apostle
 John calls him "the propitiation for our
 "sins;" and the author of this epistle, in
 another letter addressed to the Christians
 at Rome, (the principal aim whereof was
 to explain and vindicate this important
 doctrine), expressly says, that "we are
 "justified freely by the grace of God
 "through the redemption that is in Christ
 "Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a
 "propitiation

"propitiation through faith in his blood,"
 "to declare his righteousness for the re-
 mission of sin; that he may be just, and
 "the justifier of him that believeth in Je-
 "sus."

The gospel doth every where present
 him to our view, as a *powerful*, a *suitable*,
 yea, a *necessary Saviour*; so *necessary*, that
 "there is not salvation in any other;"
 "so *powerful*, that "he is able to save to
 "the uttermost all that come unto God
 "by him;" and so *suitable* to the circum-
 stances of fallen creatures, that they who
 are sunk into the most deplorable state of
 ignorance, guilt, pollution, and servitude,
 are rendered "complete in him,"—"who
 "of God is made unto them wisdom, and
 "righteousness, and sanctification, and
 "redemption."

We are further taught, that *faith* in
 Christ, or a cordial acceptance of him, in
 the full extent of his character as Media-
 tor, is the appointed means whereby we
 become interested in this all-sufficient Sa-
 viour. For "this is the command of
 "God, that we believe on the name of
 "his Son, Jesus Christ."—"He that be-
 "lieveth on the Son, hath everlasting life;
 "he

"he that believeth not the Son, shall not
 "see life, but the wrath of God abideth
 "on him." Which last expression plainly
 implies, that the sinner is previously under
 a sentence of condemnation; and that by
 rejecting the offered ransom, the sentence
 remains in full force, and his former guilt
 becomes still more aggravated by his in-
 gratitude and obstinacy:—whereas upon
 our believing in Christ Jesus, we forthwith
 obtain the remission of sins; for "the
 "blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin."
 And "being thus justified by faith, we
 "have peace with God through our Lord
 "Jesus Christ:" nay, we are adopted into
 the family of God: for "to as many as
 "receive Christ, to them gives he power
 "to become the sons of God, even to
 "them that believe on his name." Nei-
 ther is this a mere honorary title; but they
 on whom it is conferred, are actually en-
 riched with all the privileges the title im-
 ports: together with the *dignity*, they re-
 ceive the *nature* of children. They are re-
 generated by grace; the Spirit is given to
 them, both as a sanctifier and a comforter,
 to heal their diseases, and to make them
 "partakers of the divine nature;"—"to
 "shed

“to shed abroad the love of God in their
 “hearts; and to bring them with filial
 boldness to the throne of grace, where
 they shall obtain mercy, and find grace to
 help them in every time of need, till the
 divine life, which is begun on earth, shall
 attain its full perfection in the kingdom of
 heaven; that undefiled and permanent
 inheritance, which is reserved for all
 “those who being born of God, are kept
 “by his power through faith unto salva-
 “tion!”

Once more, the gospel informs us, that
 this Jesus, “who died for our sins, rose
 “again for our justification;” hereby gi-
 ving the most authentic evidence, that he
 had finished his great undertaking, and
 was accepted by the Father in all that he
 taught, “and acted, and suffered upon”
 earth; “that he ascended up on high,” as
 a triumphant conqueror, “leading capti-
 “vity captive;” where, being constituted
 “head over all things for the church,” he
 now sits enthroned at the right hand of
 God; from whence he shall once more de-
 scend to this earth, not in the form of a
 servant, but clothed with Majesty, and
 attended by all the holy angels, to gather
 “them all together.”

together his elect, in whom he shall be glorified; while at the same time, as an awful and righteous judge, he shall take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not his gospel, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

All who are acquainted with the scriptures must be sensible, that in delivering this summary of Christian doctrine, I have done little more than repeated the words of the New-Testament writers as they are translated into our own language; and therefore I may take it for granted, that those capital articles, to which many others might have been added, will readily be admitted to belong to *the gospel of Christ*.

It remains, then, to be inquired, what influence the faith of these interesting truths ought in reason to have upon our temper and practice? or, in other words, what manner of conversation is suited to such belief?

That we may be qualified to judge with greater impartiality, let us at present endeavour to forget, if possible, our personal concern in the question: and having supposed,

Supposed, that we had received information of other creatures in a state of apostasy from God, who were favoured with a revelation of the same important truths which we have found to be contained in the gospel of Christ, let each of us inquire in his own heart, what effects the firm belief of *these* truths might be expected to produce in their temper and practice?

Would we not conclude, without hesitation, that a discovery of the awful forfeiture they had incurred, would afflict their souls in the most sensible manner, and so possess them with grief, and shame, and the fearful apprehensions of deserved punishment, that all the enjoyments of a short precarious life would lose their relish, till they certainly knew that there was a possibility at least, of obtaining the pardon of their sins, and of regaining the friendship of their offended sovereign?

Would it not occur to us as a probable, or rather a necessary consequence, of this inward distress, that upon hearing the remotest intimation of a scheme for their recovery, they would anxiously inquire into the foundation of such report; and when they discovered the truth of it, that they

Q. Q. 2 would

would welcome the offered mercy with humble gratitude, and throw themselves at the feet of that generous friend who had interposed for their relief; resigning themselves, without reserve, to his disposal and government, in that very manner which is described and enjoined by the gospel of Christ?

Again, let me ask, What do you think would be the natural effects of pardon obtained, and peace restored to their troubled minds, upon that cordial acceptance of the remedy provided for them which I have just now supposed? Could any of us doubt, that their hearts would be filled with the sincerest joy, and that out of the abundance of their hearts, their lips would shew forth the praises of their deliverer, and utter the voice of gratitude and love in such language as this: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who hath redeemed thy life from destruction, and crowned thee with loving kindness, and with tender mercies." — "Return unto thy

"thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." But here likewise I must ask, Do you not think that this joy of theirs would be of a nature so pure and delicate, as to disclaim any alliance with carnal mirth and levity? Would it not be that kind of joy which a condemned criminal may be supposed to feel upon receiving the gracious pardon of his sovereign; who, while he tastes all the sweetness of his prince's clemency, and exults in the assurance of present safety, yet cannot help shuddering when he looks back to the dungeon where he lay imprisoned, and recollects the danger he hath happily escaped?

Surely all who have obtained mercy, will perceive and acknowledge the propriety of that advice, "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." None indeed have such rational grounds of joy; and they give an unfair representation of the privileges that belong to the sons of God, who walk in heaviness, and wear a dejected melancholy aspect. But still the cheerfulness of those who have passed from death to life, will, and ought to have an air of composure and solemnity, that will easily

easily distinguish it from the loose, intemperate mirth of the sensualist, which springs from no higher source than the gratification of those appetites he hath in common with the beasts that perish, or the increase of his corn, and wine, and oil. Besides, the prospect of a future judgement, which I mentioned as one of the great objects of belief, could not fail to overawe their minds, and to keep them in a sober and serious frame, rendering them no less attentive to their thoughts than to their words and actions; and constantly disposing them "to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise;" to shun the doubtful as well as the forbidden ground, "abstaining even from the appearance of evil." While at the same time, the animating hope of a glorious immortality would render them cool and indifferent to all the enjoyments of a present world; support them under every thing that is painful and afflicting; and powerfully incite them to run with patience the race set before them, till in due time they should obtain the end of their faith, even the complete and everlasting salvation of their souls.

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Such,

Such, we might well conclude, would be the influence of Christian faith upon the habitual frame and temper of their hearts.

But as my text speaks of a *conversation* becoming the gospel of Christ, let us inquire more particularly into those *visible effects* which the truths I formerly mentioned might naturally be supposed to produce in the conduct of those who sincerely believed them; *first*, with respect to God, and, *secondly*, with regard to their fellow-men.

First, with respect to God:—We should hardly be able to doubt, that creatures redeemed from misery, dignified with such honours, and enriched with such privileges, would be fond of expressing their gratitude in the most public and significant manner, and embrace every opportunity of celebrating the praises of their great deliverer. We should certainly take it for granted, that if any day was set apart for his more immediate worship and service, they would long for the return of that precious season, and wait for it more than they that watch for the morning.

We

We should not be able to suppose, that they would reckon it a burdensome institution, and say, "What a weariness is it?" or, When will the Sabbath be over? far less that they would waste it in idleness, profane it by gaming, intemperance, and lewdness; or even debase it by those employments which are lawful on other days. Such presumptuous ingratitude would appear so shocking, that we should not dare to suspect, and least of all should we believe, without ocular proof, that creatures endued with reason would be guilty of it.

Again, if any ordinance was appointed for the express purpose of commemorating redeeming love, and shewing forth the death of that compassionate Saviour, who was "wounded for their transgressions," and bruised for their sins, that by his "stripes they might be healed," could we doubt, that they would regard it as a distinguishing privilege, and attend upon it with reverence, love, and joy? especially if one great end of its institution was to confirm their faith of the divine friendship, by putting into their hands an authentic seal of that well-ordered covenant, which

conveys to every sincere believer an irre-
sistible title to all the unspeakable riches
of Christ? This appears so becoming, and
so conducing to their personal com-
fort and interest, that one should think,
a bare permission to attend upon such an
ordinance might suffice, and that there
scarcely needed the authority of a dying
command to enforce the observation of it.

Once more, might it not be hoped,
that creatures who believed and con-
fessed that they were redeemed from death
by an act of pure grace, would judge
it their indispensable duty, to live unto
him by whose mercy it was that they li-
ved at all? that they would feel in their
hearts, and practically acknowledge the
constraining force of such exhortations as
these: "Ye are not your own, ye are
bought with a price; therefore glorify
your Redeemer in your bodies and in
your spirits, which are his;"—"Ye
were sometimes darkness, but now are
ye light in the Lord; walk as children
of light;"—and, "If ye call on the Fa-
ther, who, without respect of persons,
judgeth according to every man's work."
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“pass the time of your sojourning here
 “in fear; forasmuch as ye know that ye
 “were not redeemed with corruptible
 “things, as silver and gold,—but with
 “the precious blood of Christ, as of a
 “lamb without blemish and without
 “spot?” Would you think it credible, or
 even possible, that with such great and
 interesting objects in their eye, they could
 deliberately and wilfully trample upon his
 authority, by breaking his laws; or arraign
 the wisdom and justice of his government,
 by fretting and murmuring against any of
 his dispensations? Doth it not seem far
 more likely, that they would habitually
 be disposed to say, “Lord, what wilt
 “thou have me to do?—“O that my
 “ways were directed to keep thy sta-
 “tutes!”—Or if at any time they should
 be exercised with trials and sufferings,
 that the language of their lips and hearts
 would be, “Here am I, let the Lord do
 “unto me as seemeth good unto him;”—
 “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken
 “away, blessed be the name of the
 “Lord?”—These conclusions appear so reasonable,
 and indeed so moderate, that were it pos-
 sible

file for us to forget that we ourselves are parties to the cause in question. I am verily persuaded this whole audience would readily acquiesce in them without one dissenting voice. — Let us then proceed to inquire, in the

Second place, What influence the faith of the gospel might be expected to have upon the conduct of such creatures in their social intercourse one with another.

It might suffice to observe in general, that the supreme love to their God and Saviour, which the true faith of his rich and unmerited grace could not fail to inspire, would naturally, and even necessarily, lead them to listen with becoming attention and reverence to all the intimations of his will, and habitually dispose them to perform, with alacrity and zeal, what duties soever he should be pleased to enjoin. Upon this obvious principle, then, nothing more would be needful for the illustration of this head, than to collect from the sacred records the several laws concerning truth, justice, mercy, beneficence, and any other precepts that regarded them in their social state; as we should not be able to entertain a doubt, that, so

far as the imperfection of their nature permitted, there would be the inviolable rules of their conduct. But as the laws of the gospel are afterwards to be considered apart by themselves, I shall at present confine our inquiry to the influence which a serious belief of the great doctrines of Christianity might be supposed to have upon those kinds of intercourse which more immediately pertained to their common salvation. Say, then, doth it not appear highly probable, that they who relished the joyful tidings, while they made them the subject of their own delightful meditation, would likewise take pleasure in imparting them to others, especially to those with whom they were most intimately connected? that parents in particular would rehearse and commend them to their children; and that in every family, the God of all grace, and the Saviour of a lost world, would be presented with the morning and evening sacrifices of humble adoration, of fervent prayer, and of thankful praise?

How would they behave, do you think, to such of their brethren, if any such there were, who neglected the great sal-
 tion,

tion, and still remained in their natural state of distance and alienation from God? Would they regard them with supercilious contempt, or treat them with harsh severity? would they lay aside all concern for their recovery, and leave them to perish in their folly? or rather, would they not look upon them with an eye of the tenderest pity; and, regarding them as criminals, who, though at present under an awful sentence of condemnation, may nevertheless obtain mercy, even as they themselves have obtained mercy, would they not take hold of every favourable opportunity, nay, may we not conclude, that they would even seek out opportunities, of awakening them to a sense of their guilt and danger, that they might feel themselves constrained to implore the protection of that *good Shepherd* who laid down his life for the sheep, and came from heaven to earth to seek and to save that which was lost?

View them once more in their intercourse with those who have obtained the same grace, and are become co-heirs of the same incorruptible inheritance.

Would you not take it for granted, that they

they could not be long together, without talking of those matters that most nearly concerned them?—Surely none could suspect, that in a company of such persons, it would ever be reckoned a breach of good manners, to introduce any thing that related to their Father in heaven;—to his house with many mansions, where they all hoped to dwell;—or to that precious Redeemer, who hath gone before to prepare a place for them. Might it not rather be expected, that besides occasional converse upon subjects of so interesting a nature, they would chuse to set apart some portions of time, for the sole purpose of “comforting themselves together, and edifying one another,” according to the early practice of the Christians at Thessalonica, which our apostle so highly commends, 1 Thess. v. 11.?

Thus have I given you my cool deliberate sentiments upon the practical influence of the great doctrines of the gospel, and that kind of conversation towards God and man which is best suited to the belief of them. Should any indeed be so perverse, as to resist the influence of these doctrines,

and

and counteract their native and most obvious tendency, while at the same time they acknowledged the evidence of their truth, it would not at all surprize me to see them crouding, from day to day, the public theatres, that the regularity and decorum of a fictitious representation, might draw their attention away from that real and ill-conducted medley in which they themselves acted their disgraceful parts. I should not wonder to behold them flying with eagerness to cards and dice, and seeking aid from every engine of dissipation and noise, to conceal the lapse of time, and to bear down the clamours of an accusing conscience. It would not even surprize me, to see them rushing headlong into the haunts of riot and debauch, that the intoxicating cup might either stupify or madden their reason, which, if left to its sober exercise, would anticipate the evil day, and torment them before the time. — Such things as these I should expect to see; but for none of them could I find any place at all in the natural and orderly state of reasonable creatures, whose temper and conduct, as I have all along supposed,

posed, were formed and regulated by the doctrines of the gospel.

How far my reasoning upon this branch of the subject hath been just, will more fully appear afterwards. It no doubt exhibits to our view a state of things widely different from what we at present behold; which, I am aware, may furnish us all with matter of humbling and painful reflection. This, however, shall not discourage me from proceeding in my inquiry; as I well know, that if, "by the sadness of the countenance, the heart be made better," we shall in the issue be infinite gainers, and obtain from him who is "the comforter of those that are cast down," "the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

MAY God dispose and enable us all to "judge righteous judgement." Amen.

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doctrines of the gospel, were formed and regulated by the

How far my reasoning upon this branch

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appear afterwards. It no doubt exhibits to our view a state of things widely different

from what we see in the world; which

PHILIPPIANS, i. 27.

Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.

This however, shall not discourage me from proceeding in my inquiry; as I well

WE have already considered the most essential doctrines contained in the gospel of Christ, and the influence that the cordial belief of such interesting truths might be expected to have upon our temper and practice.

I am not sensible that any of the conclusions I drew were strained, or even obscure. To me they appeared, and, after the most serious and impartial examination, still do appear, so reasonable and obvious, and withal so moderate, that I cannot think they are liable to any just objection.

At the same time, as they present to our view a state of things so widely different from that which daily passeth before our eyes, I shall now proceed to consider the

LAWs or precepts of our holy religion; that, from the review of these, we may discover, with still greater certainty, what the *conversation* is that may be said to *become the gospel of Christ*.

BUT before I descend to particulars upon this extensive subject, I must beg your attention to a few remarks I have to make upon the precepts or laws of the gospel in general.

With regard to their *authority*, there can be no doubt. He who enacted them hath an unquestionable right to our most perfect obedience: "In the beginning " was the Word, and the Word was with " God, and the Word was God: all things " were made by him, and without him " was not any thing made that was made."

We are therefore his *property* in the most absolute and unlimited sense of that expression. He called us into being when as yet we were not, and every moment he sustains that existence which he gave us; for " in him we live and move." Nay, all that we possess is so necessarily dependent upon him, that with regard to soul, and body, and outward estate, we have no-
 2 thing

thing but what we daily receive from his liberal hand. Besides this original and unalienable right to govern us, there is another title, which, as Christians, we profess to acknowledge, and ought always to do it with the warmest and most humble gratitude; I mean the right he hath obtained by redemption and purchase. As his natural subjects, we are bound to serve him to the utmost extent of the powers he hath given us: and this original obligation, instead of being relaxed or impaired, is rather confirmed and strengthened by the mercy he hath shown us as the objects of his grace: "We are not our own, we are bought with a price;" and are therefore bound, by the united ties of gratitude and justice, "to glorify our Redeemer, both with our bodies and spirits, which are his."

But what I would chiefly lead your attention to, is the *nature and properties* of those laws to which our subjection and obedience are required.

They are "all holy, just, and good," resulting from the very frame our creator hath given us, and from the relation we bear to himself, and to other beings with

whom his Providence hath connected us. Hence it follows, that they are equally incapable of repeal or abatement. The laws of men are local, temporary, changeable, and always partake of the imperfection of their authors. Some of them are so obscure, that they need another law to explain them; and it often happens, that the commentary is darker than the text. The best of them take their aim from some temporal evil that is either presently felt, or foreseen in its cause; and the highest end they propose, is to restrain from injuries of the grosser kind: they do not even pretend to be a rule of moral conduct; they prohibit and denounce vengeance against theft, robbery, murder, and the like; but lay no restraint upon heart-hatred, covetousness, and envy. They tell us in what instances injustice or cruelty become excessive and intolerable; but where do we find it written in any body of human laws, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them?" Whereas the laws of the gospel extend to the heart as well as to the life, and speak

to all men without exception, at all times, and in every situation. They utter their voice with such precision and perspicuity, that none can be at a loss to discover their meaning. They do not bend to the humours of men, nor accommodate themselves to those flexible maxims and customs which by turns prevail in this or the other age and country; far less do they grow obsolete, as human statutes do, which by long disuse lose their force and become void: like their great master, what they were yesterday they are the same to-day; and in every succeeding period, their efficacy will continue till time itself shall be no more. And therefore, when I repeat the words of this sacred book, you are to consider them as spoken to yourselves in particular; and no less binding upon you in their most simple and obvious meaning, than they formerly were upon those to whom they were primarily addressed.

One thing further I would recommend to your notice, viz. that the laws I am speaking of are the laws of him "who loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling savour;" and therefore we may
rest

rest assured, that they are kind as well as righteous, and suited with perfect wisdom to be the means of promoting our truest interest. They are laws which he himself hath magnified and made honourable, not only by answering all their demands, so far as his high character would permit, or his peculiar circumstances afforded occasion; but likewise by expiating the guilt incurred by the transgression of them, and bearing in his own person the punishment that was due to the offending creature.

This last consideration sets the obedience required of us in a most endearing point of light. It is not the servile task of a hireling who labours for his wages, but the ingenuous and grateful service of a loving child. Christ hath purchased the glorious inheritance; and to all who believe on him, eternal life is the free gift of God through the merit of his blood: so that nothing is required of them, but what tends to purify and perfect their natures, that, by a growing resemblance to the Father of their spirits in this state of discipline, they may be rendered meet for the full and everlasting enjoyment of him,

when

when death, by dissolving the earthly tabernacle, shall pull down all that remains of the first Adam, and bring a final release from the body of sin.

HAVING premised these general remarks, I shall now proceed to remind you of those particular precepts to which our conformity is required by the gospel of Christ. And we are happily furnished with a short, but most comprehensive, summary of them, by this same apostle, in his epistle to Titus, chap. ii. 11. 12. *The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.*

To these general heads, all the particulars may be reduced that belong to a conversation becoming the gospel of Christ. And here indeed I might stop short, and only call upon you to weigh, with candour and impartiality, the full meaning and import of the expressions here used.

What do you understand by *ungodliness* and *worldly lusts*? Do these terms reach no farther than to the grosser acts of impiety

piety and sensual indulgence? And is nothing more intended by *denying* them, than a prudish reserve and shyness, to comply with their demands; or such a feeble resistance as yields after a short and very imperfect struggle? Surely none of you can seriously entertain this opinion. You certainly must admit, that no exception is made of any species or degree whatsoever, either of *ungodliness* or *worldly affections*; and that by *denying* them, the apostle could mean nothing less, than such a refusal as proceeds from an inward abhorrence of them, even the most vigorous, determined, and persevering resistance of all their solicitations.

Again, What do you understand by *living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*?—Doth *sobriety* mean no more, than that species of moderation which is commonly opposed to surfeiting and drunkenness? Or admitting that it excludes every kind of excess in gratifying our bodily appetites, do you imagine that it leaves the mind at full liberty, so that we may lay the reins upon the neck of our passions, and suffer them to run wild without any controul, in perfect consistency with

with that *sobriety* which the Apostle recommends?

Will you call a man *righteous*, merely because he cannot be charged with any gross acts of fraud, injustice, and oppression, though perhaps, in the course of a lawful business, he may sometimes use a little artifice to impose upon the simplicity or ignorance of his neighbours? Or, supposing him to be strictly honest in his dealings, doth the *righteousness* which the gospel enjoins lay him under no obligation to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to succour the distressed, according to his ability?

Is every man to be reputed *godly*, who doth not openly blaspheme, nor reproach the laws and ordinances of God; who gives regular attendance at church on the Lord's day, though his heart even then be running after his covetousness; and God receive no homage from him at all, either in his family or in the closet, through the rest of the week?

Were I to give such a loose interpretation of the Apostle's words, I am confident that the most partial offender who hears me, would not only condemn me in his

heart, but even bluff, or rather disdain, to plead my authority for defending or palliating his own misconduct.

But the true import of *sobriety*, *righteousness*, and *godliness*, is ascertained beyond any possibility of mistake, by what I may call the *statute-law* of the gospel; I mean, plain and explicit decrees, respecting particular instances of duty, under each of these general heads. Thus, in the

First place, With regard to *sobriety*, it is the express command of our Lord, "That we deny ourselves;"—That we "possess our souls in patience;"—and be continually on our guard, "lest at any time our hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the *cares* of *this life*." It is required of us, "that we crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts;"—"that we lay aside anger, malice, envy, hatred, and revenge," and "put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and long-suffering." We are exhorted, "not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but to think *soberly*," (mark the expression), according as God hath dealt

"to

“to every man the measure of faith,”
 “Let nothing be done through strife and
 “vain glory,” saith this same apostle, at
 the 3d verse of the following chapter,
 “but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem
 “other better than himself. Look not e-
 “very man on his own things, but
 “every man also on the things of others;”
 and then adds, “Let this mind be in you,
 “which was also in Christ Jesus.” These
 few quotations, which must be familiar to
 all who are acquainted with the New-Te-
 stament writings, may suffice to give you
 some view of the extent of *sobriety*, as in-
 cluding every thing that belongs to the
 right government and discipline, both of
 the outward and inward man.

2dly, With respect to *righteousness*, we
 are plainly taught, that it not only re-
 strains from the outward acts of injustice,
 oppression, and cruelty, but that we are
 thereby obliged to render unto all their
 dues, and to do unto others, as with good
 reason we would expect or desire that they,
 in like circumstances, should do unto us.
 It belongs to righteousness, “to comfort
 “the feeble-minded, and to support the
 “weak,” as being members one of ano-
 ther;

ther; for thus it is written, Gal. vi. 2.
 "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so
 "fulfil the law of Christ." We are com-
 manded to "be of the same mind one to-
 "wards another;" — "to rejoice with
 "them that rejoice, and to weep with
 "those that weep;" — "to do good to all
 "as we have opportunity, especially to
 "them who are of the household of faith."
 "As every man hath received the gift,"
 saith the Apostle Peter, "even so minister
 "the same one to another, as good stew-
 "ards of the manifold grace of God."
 Nay, the Apostle John carries the matter
 still higher, and speaks of it as a *debt*, an
 act of justice, in certain cases, to lay down
 our *lives* for the brethren: 1 John iii. 16.
 "Hereby perceive we the love of God,
 "because he laid down his life for us:
 "and we *ought* to lay down our lives for
 "the brethren." It is an error to ima-
 gine, that God bestows upon us the good
 things of this life, merely for our perso-
 nal accommodation and use; or that he o-
 pens his hand, and fills our basket, that
 the blessings of his Providence may there
 stagnate and putrify. We are not *proprie-
 tors*, but *stewards*, as I just now observed,
 who

who shall one day be called upon to give an account of our stewardship. And tho' the gripping miser cannot be arraigned at any human bar, yet at the tribunal of Jesus Christ, he who doth not feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, shall be tried, and condemned to everlasting banishment from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

You say, You wrong no man by keeping your own. I answer, You wrong the King of kings, if you suffer a subject of his to perish, when it is in the power of your hand to prevent it: and though the laws of men permit you to give or to withhold, according to your pleasure, whatsoever you possess independent of others; yet if you consult the lively oracles of God, you shall there find, that you are as much bound to do good to your neighbours, as not to injure them; to supply their wants, as not to rob them; to stretch forth your hand to help them, as not to smite them with the fist of wickedness.

—“To him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.”—“If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are
 “ ready

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"ready to be slain; if thou sayest. Be-
 "hold, we knew it not:—doth not he that
 "pondereth the heart consider it, and he
 "that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know
 "it? and shall not he render to every
 "man according to his works;" Prov.
 xxiv. 11. 12. How awful are these words
 of the Apostle John, "Whoso hath this
 "world's good, and seeth his brother
 "have need, and shutteth up his bowels
 "of compassion from him, how dwelleth
 "the love of God in him?" To which
 he subjoins the following exhortation,
 whereunto we do well that we take heed:
 "My little children, let us not love in
 "word, neither in tongue, but in deed
 "and in truth: and hereby we know
 "that we are of the truth, and shall as-
 "sure our hearts before him."—Thus
 far is the law of *righteousness* extended by
 the *gospel of Christ*.

3dly, With regard to *godliness*, none who
 are acquainted with the New-Testament
 writings can be at a loss to discover, either
 wherein it consists, or how it ought to be
 expressed. Love to God in the renewed
 soul, springing from faith in the Lord Je-
 sus Christ, is the root, or vital principle,

of

of godliness: not a common subdued love, but a fervent, supreme, and ruling love, that exalts God to the throne in the heart, and desireth nothing so much, as that he should keep it in full and everlasting possession. As creatures, we are bound to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and strength: And we are further obliged, as *guilty* creatures, humbly to acknowledge the forfeiture we have incurred, to justify the law by which we are condemned, thankfully to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Mediator between God and man, and carefully to observe and improve all those ordinances which God hath appointed, as the methods of testifying our subjection and gratitude, or as means of receiving the communications of his grace, for healing our diseased natures, and rendering us meet for the enjoyment of himself in heaven. These are essential parts of the religion of a sinner; and must therefore be considered as the genuine and necessary expressions of godliness, or of a right temper of heart towards the Father of our spirits, the God in whom we live; the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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All the duties we owe to our fellow-creatures lean upon this as their proper foundation; and are so dependent upon it, that neither our righteousness, nor beneficence, can avail us any thing, unless they flow from a living principle of devotion in the heart. They may profit others, and render ourselves amiable in the eyes of men; but if they be not animated with love to God, and accompanied with suitable expressions of regard to him, it is impossible they can meet with the divine acceptance. For let it be observed, that the *practice* of these duties became necessary *only* through man's apostasy. Had we kept our first estate, there would have been no room for the exercise of either justice or mercy in any of those instances which our present distempered condition requires. Men would have lived together as one great family, without strife or emulation, each rejoicing in the happiness of his brother. There would have been no temptation to fraud and injustice; every inhabitant of the earth possessing all that his heart could wish. There would have been no occasion for redressing wrongs; for punishing the injurious, or protecting

the injured; for relieving the poor, or sympathising with the afflicted: love would have had no other employment, but complacency and delight in seeing each one blessed to the full extent of his capacity: and therefore it can never be supposed, that the practice of those duties, which the bitter consequences of our guilt *alone* have rendered necessary, should be the whole, or even the most essential part, of that obedience which is pleasing to God.

Indeed were we to look upon the present state of the world as the original constitution, we might be apt to conclude, that our chief business upon earth consisted in the exercise of those social virtues which knit men together, and enable them to provide most effectually for their common defence against those numberless evils to which they are continually exposed. But if we view the present state as the ruins of one far more perfect and excellent, which we forfeited by our unprovoked and criminal revolt from the great author of our existence, we must be sensible, that the bare performance of those social duties we owe to one another, can be of little account in the sight of God, so long as we

persist in our rebellion against himself, and neglect those higher duties which arise from our first and most lasting relation.

Godliness, my brethren, is the one thing needful: did *that* prevail in its power, *sobriety* and *righteousness* would follow of course, and maintain their ground against every assault, having so firm and permanent a basis to lean upon: but till godliness be laid as the foundation, any attempt to introduce or establish either of the other two, must be vain and fruitless.

Loud and general hath been the cry for some time past, after public spirit, disinterested patriotism, and integrity, which can neither be bribed nor overawed, among those who move in the upper ranks of life. These qualities, it must be confessed, accompanied with a large proportion of wisdom, are truly desirable, and might be eminently useful; and when it shall please God to bestow them, they will no doubt appear very beautiful in their season: but if all who join in the cry, would endeavour, in the first place, to get their own hearts possessed with real godliness, and then pray for the same blessing to others, with as much fervency as they utter

utter their complaints, I can assure them they would be taking by far the nearest road to success. "The fear of the Lord" is the beginning of wisdom," and love carries it to perfection; but when these find no place in the hearts of men, what can be looked for in such a world as ours, but the rankest growth of folly and wickedness, both in public and private life?

FROM this general review of the LAWS of Christ, you must be sensible, that the same temper and conduct which we formerly supposed to result from a cordial belief of the DOCTRINES of the gospel, now appear to be expressly enjoined by plain and positive statutes: so that, upon the whole, we are furnished with a decisive test of genuine Christianity, and may clearly see, by the light of God's word, what the *conversation* is that *becometh the gospel of Christ*.

It gives me pain to repeat the observation I have more than once hinted at, (and yet the evidence of its truth is too glaring to be concealed), namely, that among the multitudes who bear the title of Christians, the conversation of by much

the greater part is so far from expressing the true spirit and genius of our holy religion, with regard either to the doctrines it reveals, or the duties it requires, that the character of the Grotians may too justly be applied to many of them, Tit. 1. 16. "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." To such inconsistent usurpers of the Christian name, the obvious remarks with which I introduced my first discourse upon this subject, administer a severe, but just reproof: and therefore I might here dismiss them without further admonition, were it not that numbers are to be found in that unhappy class of men, who, not contented with publishing their own shame, by counteracting the principles of that religion they profess, are bold enough to scoff at true godliness in others, and do every thing in their power to enfeeble the hands of real Christians, while they are humbly endeavouring, by the grace of God, to have their conversation as it becometh the gospel of Christ. I know how difficult it is to get access to those who are proudly seated in

the lecturer's chair; nevertheless I shall take the liberty to beg their attention to a few plain questions, praying that God may carry them home to their hearts with power, and so bless them for their conviction, "that they may yet recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

Do you really think it possible, that any man can love God too well, or serve him with too much zeal and diligence?—Do you think, that there is a saint in heaven who repents of his zeal and diligence while on earth? or a sinner in hell, that justifies his scoffing at serious religion? or do you suppose, that you yourselves shall approve of such conduct when you come to die, and boldly defend it at the tribunal of Christ?—What can be more unfair, than to scoff at men for being, in truth, the very thing that you pretend to be? You call yourselves Christians, and at the same time deride those who are Christians indeed: It is your professed belief, that Christ shall judge the world; and when others are giving all diligence that they may be found of him in peace, they are mocked and reviled, and hated by you upon
that

that account; nay, which is still more injurious, they are branded with the odious name of *hypocrites*, by those very persons who themselves are the most impudent hypocrites upon earth. For tell me, thou who retainest the name of Christian, what grosser hypocrisy can be imagined, than to hate the serious practice of thy own profession, and to reproach others for living by the influence of those very principles which thine own false tongue professeth to believe?

These are all the questions I shall put to you at present: and the main thing intended by them, is to give you such a view of the folly and inconsistency of your character, that if modesty be not altogether banished, I may at least bring you the length of being ashamed of your conduct. But though modesty should be gone, yet as fear and self-love are still left behind, I shall endeavour, in few words, to give you a just representation of the peculiar malignity of such a course, and of the fatal consequences with which an obstinate continuance in it must necessarily be attended.

Know, then, that to scoff at the sanctifying

fying work of the Spirit of God, is a sin
 of so deep a tincture, that it approacheth
 near to the confines of "the great transgres-
 sion." This much I may with confidence
 affirm, that so long as you persist in it,
 there is no room for any rational hope
 that you shall be saved. With God indeed
 all things are possible: he is able of such
 stones to raise up children unto Abraham;
 and therefore some hope is left that you
 may be converted: but that you should be
 saved in your present course, is just as im-
 possible as it is for God to lie, as impos-
 sible as for the devils to be saved. It is
 an astonishing proof of the power and
 cunning of the grand deceiver, that he
 should be able to hide this alarming truth
 from your own eyes. The scorner bears
 upon his forehead one of the most distin-
 guishing marks of a son of perdition. Of
 such transgressors, it may be said with
 an awful emphasis, "their spot is not
 the spot of children." — Other sinners
 may find some cloke to throw over their
 guilt: the recorded failings of some emi-
 nent saints may be so far perverted, as to
 cherish the presumption and soothe the
 consciences of various kinds of sinners;
 but

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but where do we read of any among the saints who scoffed at holiness, or spake reproachfully of the ways of God? Surely no man of common understanding can suppose, that a scorner of a holy life is himself possessed of that holiness which he derides. I would not for a world, said one, be in the case of that wretch, who speaketh well of holiness in others, while he himself lives in sensuality and wickedness; but I would much less for a thousand worlds, be in the case of him that is neither godly, nor can speak well of godliness; who is not only void of the image of God, but hates, and reviles, and persecutes it in others. — Consider, O sinners! while yet there is hope, how terrible your eternal state must be, if death overtake you in this malignant course. The Lord Jesus is now calling upon you in mercy, and saying unto you, as once he said to Saul, “Why persecutest thou me?” But if you do not hearken to his voice, and turn from your evil way, ere long “he will speak to you in wrath, and vex you in his sore displeasure:” for “behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgement upon
“all,

“all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their *hard speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

There is an alarming passage, (Psal. vii. 11. 12. 13.), which I would recommend to your serious perusal: “God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the *persecutors*.” God himself hath undertaken the defence of the just: Christ will finally be glorified in his saints, when all their enemies shall be cast out of his sight, overwhelmed with shame, and doomed to everlasting contempt and misery.

Thus far have I spoken for the conviction and reproof of those who have the boldness to scoff at vital religion and practical godliness; and shall now conclude the subject with a few words of advice and encouragement to the true servants of **Yours** **Tr** Christ,

Christ, who feel the influences of his gospel, and are determined, through grace, to live unto him who died for them.

Let me then call upon you to lay your account with opposition in your way heavenward. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you; but rather rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of the sufferings of your Lord, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. You have good company, you have powerful assistance, and glorious hopes; "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of God and of glory resteth upon you." "Stand fast," therefore, as the apostle exhorts you in the words following my text, "in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." Beware of courting the favour of the wicked, by conforming in any degree to their corrupt maxims and practices;

practices; but keep up the majesty of true
godliness, and study so to live, that they
may find no occasion against you, except
in be concerning the law of your God.

"Be blameless and harmless, the sons of
God, without rebuke, in the midst of a
crooked and perverse nation, among
whom ye shine as lights in the world,
holding forth the word of life." "Fi-
nally, brethren, whatsoever things are
true, whatsoever things are honest,
whatsoever things are just, whatsoever
things are pure, whatsoever things are
lovely, whatsoever things are of good
report; if there be any virtue, and if
there be any praise, think on these
things." "and the God of peace shall
be with you." Amen.

in one spirit
together for the sake of the gospel;
in humility, fearing by your adver-
ties: which is to them an evident token
of perdition. But to you of salvation,
and that of God, for unto you it is
in the behalf of Christ, not only
to believe on him, but also to suffer for
his sake. Beware of counting the sa-
vour of the wicked, by consoling in a-
ny degree to their corrupt maxims and
practices.

T 1 2

SER

“ bow, of things in heaven, and things
 “ in earth, and things under the earth;
 “ and that every tongue should confess,
 “ **S E R M O N XIV.**

“ of God the Father.” This doctrine we
 all profess to believe; but the delig-
 ROMANS, XIV. 8.

“ Whether we live, we live unto the Lord;
 “ and whether we die, we die unto the
 “ Lord: whether we live therefore or die,
 “ we are the Lord’s.”

THE following verse will inform you
 who that Lord is of whom the a-
 postle speaks in this passage. “ To this
 “ end,” saith he, “ Christ both died, and
 “ rose, and revived, that he might be
 “ Lord both of the dead and living.” He
 is the King whom God hath set upon his
 holy hill of Zion, and appointed to be the
 head over all things to the church: for as
 Paul wrote to the Philippians, in regard
 of his humbling himself, and becoming
 obedient unto death, even the death of
 the cross; “ therefore God also hath high-
 “ ly exalted him, and given him a name
 “ which is above every name; that at
 “ the name of Jesus every knee should
 “ bow,

“ bow, of things in heaven, and things
 “ in earth, and things under the earth;
 “ and that every tongue should confess,
 “ that Jesus Christ is *Lord*, to the glory
 “ of God the Father.” This doctrine we

all profess to believe; nay, the designation we bear, imports an acknowledgement that Christ is our master. But something more than the appellation of Christians is necessary to prove that we are in truth his servants. The proper, the only decisive test, is that which lies before us in the words of my text; where one who knew well what Christianity was, thus speaks in the name of all sincere believers:

*Whether we live, we live unto the Lord;
 and whether we die, we die unto the Lord:
 whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's.*

It is the comprehensive description of the Christian's life, expressed in these few, but emphatical words, *We live unto the Lord*, which I have chosen for the subject of the following discourse. And my design is,

I. To inquire into the import of *living unto the Lord*; and,

II. To apply the character as a measure,

or standard, for helping us to judge of our spiritual condition.

Living unto the Lord may be considered as including the following particulars:

1st, That we make his will the rule, the only rule, of our conduct.

Our Lord hath intrusted us with various talents, and requires that we should improve them to the best advantage, for the important purposes for which they were bestowed. We are *his* servants, and have a task assigned us, for which we must be accountable to him at last. It is not left to our own choice what pieces of service we shall perform; but we must at all times wait upon him for direction, saying, as Paul did when struck to the ground, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Neither is it enough that we do the things he requires, unless we do them *because* he requires them. The laws of our Lord are so wisely calculated to promote the private interests of individuals, and the public welfare of human society, that they who are most disaffected to his government, will chuse, for their own sake, to comply with many of his sacred

sacred injunctions, that they, and they only, live unto the Lord, who realises his authority, and do every thing he enjoins, as an act of willing and cheerful obedience, as a part of that homage they owe to their master.

2dly, *To live unto the Lord*, is to make his approbation our governing aim, and to study to please him in all that we do. I need not tell you, that we early contract a love for many things which are hurtful to our souls, and stand condemned by the laws of our Sovereign. This renders some parts of duty so painful to the flesh, that they are compared in scripture to the "cutting off a right hand," and the "plucking out a right eye;" operations which no man would submit to, far less perform them himself, unless the preservation of the rest of his body rendered them absolutely necessary. Other parts of duty are attended with inconveniencies of a different kind: They may draw upon us the scorn, the hatred, and persecution of a partial, blind, malignant world; so that if we listen either to the corrupt part of our own nature, or to the voice of the multitude, we shall unavoidably be persuaded

suaded to leave them undone, or rather to do the contrary. Nothing else than a prevailing habitual desire to please *the Lord*, can reconcile us to the practice of these self-denying duties. But if this principle be deeply rooted in our hearts, the roughest paths of obedience will soon become smooth: with resolution, nay with chearfulness, we shall address ourselves to our work; declining no service, how painful or difficult soever, that we know will be crowned with the approbation of our judge. Thus did the primitive Christians *live unto the Lord*. It appeared a small matter to them to be judged of man's judgement: this was their labour, that whether present or absent, they might be accepted of their master. They so spake, and so acted, not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth the hearts of his creatures, and will render unto every one according to his works.

3dly, To *live unto the Lord*, is to make his glory our end in every thing we do.

Paul expressed the genuine spirit of Christianity, when, with a dignity becoming the character of an apostle, he thus wrote to the Philippians: "I would ye should understand,

" understand, brethren, that the things
 " which happened unto me, have fallen
 " out, rather unto the furtherance of the
 " gospel: so that my bonds in Christ are
 " manifest in all the palace, and in all
 " other places; and many of the brethren
 " in the Lord waxing confident by my
 " bonds, are much more bold to speak
 " the word without fear. Some indeed
 " preach Christ even of envy and strife;
 " and some also of good will. The one
 " preach Christ of contention, not sincere-
 " ly, supposing to add affliction to my
 " bonds; but the other of love, knowing
 " that I am set for the defence of the go-
 " spel. What then? notwithstanding e-
 " very way, whether in pretence, or in
 " truth, Christ is preached; and I there-
 " in do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.
 " For I know that this shall turn to my
 " salvation, through your prayer, and
 " the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
 " according to my earnest expectation, and
 " my hope, that in nothing I shall be a-
 " shamed, but that with all boldness, as al-
 " ways, so now also *Christ shall be magni-
 " fied in my body, whether it be by life
 " or by death.* For to me to live is Christ,

“and to die is gain;” Philip. i. 12.—21.
 If we live unto the Lord, we shall not seek great things for ourselves. This will be our only concern, that the Lord may be magnified in us, and by us, either by our doing or suffering; by our life, or by our death. We shall be contented to be employed in any station his wisdom shall chuse for us, and study to honour him in that station, by the diligent performance of the duties that belong to it. Though we occupy the meanest office in his family, we shall with pleasure apply ourselves to the work of that office, without repining at those who are dignified with a higher place; nay, instead of looking at them with envy, we shall rejoice to behold their diligence and success. If our Lord be well served, if much work be done, that will satisfy us, by whatsoever hands the work is carried on. We shall execute what falls to our own share in the best manner we can; and pray for larger measures of grace to those who have the honour to be employed in higher pieces of service.

4thly, To live unto the Lord, is to be wholly resigned to his disposal; blessing him

him at *all* times, in adversity as well as in prosperity, making him as welcome to take from us as to give unto us.

How well our apostle had learned this important lesson, appears from his own words, Philip. iv. 12. "I know both how
 "to be abased, and I know how to a-
 "bound: every where, and in all things
 "I am instructed, both to be full and to
 "be hungry, both to abound and to suf-
 "fer need." It is rebellion against our Lord to repine at any of his dispensations, how afflicting soever. — What have we that we did not receive from him? and is it not lawful for him to do what he will with his own? David, after contemplating the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which he had ordained, breaks forth into this exclamation, Psal. viii. 4. "What is man, that
 "thou art mindful of him? and the son
 "of man, that thou visitest him? For
 "thou hast made him a little lower than
 "the angels, and hast crowned him with
 "glory and honour." He there celebrates the goodness of God, in assigning to man, at his first creation, so high a rank among the variety and immensity of his works.

The form of expression is a little varied, Psal. cxliv. 3.; where, speaking of God's condescension to man in his fallen and degraded state, he saith, "Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man, that thou makest account of him? Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away." This reflection arose from the experience he had of God's unmerited kindness to himself, "who had taught his hands to war, and his fingers to fight;" who had raised him from the sheepfold to the throne of Israel, and had "subdued his people under him." But I am persuaded you will agree with me, that what Job saith, (Job vii. 17. 18.), is more striking and emphatical than either of the former two; when, in the deepest adversity, he expressed himself thus: "What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him? and that thou shouldst set thine heart upon him? and that thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" David, speaking of the divine *beneficence*, calls it a being "mindful" of man, "taking knowledge" of man, and "making account"

"counts" of him : but when Job speaks of *correction*, and chastisement, he raiseth his style, and calls it God's "magnifying man," and "setting his heart" upon him. He wonders that God should bestow such attention upon a sinful creature; that he should stoop so low as to become his physician; nay, that he should visit him every morning, to administer medicine for the recovery of his spiritual health, afflicting his body for the good of his soul. In this light will the true disciple of Jesus Christ view the most distressful events of divine providence. Convinced that his Lord knows what is good for him, better than he doth, he will kiss the rod, and make every dispensation welcome; and though nature may shrink a little, and even with that the bitter cup might pass from him, yet grace will teach him to consent, and dispose him to say, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done." Once more,

Job. To live unto the Lord, is to be so thoroughly devoted to him, as to account that we *live not* at all, but in so far as we serve him, and shew forth his praise.

This, I apprehend, expresseth the true spirit

spirit of the apostle's words. He reckoned nothing worthy to be called *living* that was not subservient to the great purpose for which life was bestowed. He measured his time, not by days, or months, or years; but by a succession of services to his dear master, by those acts of obedience he was enabled to perform. What portions of time were otherwise employed, he did not esteem to be living at all; these he reckoned among the vacancies of life, like the hours that pass away in sleep, which is the image of death. The true Christian prefers one day in the courts of the Lord to a thousand any where else, and would rather be a door-keeper in the house of his God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Thus have I told you what is included in *living unto the Lord*. I shall now proceed,

II. In the *second* place, to apply this description of genuine Christianity as a measure or standard for helping us to judge of our spiritual condition. For this end, I must beg your attention, and the answer

of a true conscience, to the following questions.

1st, Of what weight is the authority of God in your hearts?

I am not inquiring whether the things you do are commanded by God. I formerly observed, that there may be a deception here. God enjoins many things as duty, to which human nature, even in its present state, feeleth no aversion: for our apostasy was chiefly from God himself; and though some fierce and unsocial passions have sprung from this bitter root, yet, in the main, we are not naturally disaffected to our fellow-men, but rather disposed to wish them well, and even to do them good, provided our personal interest be not hurt by it. And therefore no man can be said with certainty to live *unto the Lord*, merely because he performs the common offices of justice, humanity, and beneficence, towards others with whom he is connected: for these things have a comeliness in them that is obvious to the dimmest eye; they are of good report among all men; and in most cases, a man cannot serve himself more effectually than by practising them. But if he

• practise

practise them, merely, or even principally, to promote his own interest, he must not pretend that he *liveth unto the Lord*: he only serves himself, and must therefore be left to reward himself as he can. If he do not mean to serve the Lord, if he do not act from love and loyalty to his Sovereign, he can have no ground to expect any reward at his hand.

2^{dly}, Whom do you seek to please, and whose approbation do you principally covet?

If you only, or even chiefly, court the applause of men, it is plain that you do not *live unto the Lord*. "We labour," saith the Apostle Paul, in name of all true believers, "that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Christ;"

2 Cor. v. 9.—The Pharisees gave much alms; they were frequent, and loud, and long in their prayers: but they did all "to be seen of men;" and therefore our Lord styled them *hypocrites*, and denounced many awful woes against them. I am sensible that this species of hypocrisy is not the disease of the present age: there are few that make much noise about their prayers, or their alms; and there are

still fewer, I suppose, that can justly be charged with excess in either, so that a caution against being righteous overmuch, seems quite superfluous. But can you discover nothing in yourselves that is akin to this hypocrisy? Are you as ready to perform the most self-denying duties, as those that are accompanied with immediate pleasure or advantage? Are you the same in secret, that you appear, or wish to appear, in public? Or rather, do you not suit your behaviour to the humour of the times? Can you charge yourselves with no instances of a timid compliance with the prevailing maxims and manners of the world? Hath not *fashion* some weight with you, to draw you into many things which you do not inwardly approve? and are you not often restrained from doing what conscience tells you ought to be done, by the fear of incurring the ridicule and censure of others, even of those whom, in your hearts, you do not, and cannot esteem? If so, then these very hearts must testify against you, that hitherto you have not been *living unto the Lord*.

245. What regard do you feel for the honour of your Lord?

Are you willing to become any thing, to do any thing, and to suffer any thing, for his sake? Are you contented to serve him in the meanest station in his family; or if you aspire to an higher place, is it solely to enlarge your sphere of usefulness, that you may labour more abundantly, and serve him to greater advantage, than your present inferior situation will permit?—When we see you climbing upwards as fast as you can, may we really suppose, that this is your aim?—That it ought to be your aim is obvious; for he who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, keeps no idle attendants about his person for mere parade and show. Earthly princes, who are made of the same materials with other men, need many external appendages to eke them out, as it were, and to give them bulk and importance in the eye of the world: but he who made the heavens and earth, infinitely disdains to borrow any significance from the workmanship of his own hands. The angels that excel in strength, do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word: the highest seraph hath his task: “They are all ministering spirits, sent forth
“ to

"to minister for them who shall be heirs
 "of salvation."—And can any of the sons
 of men be so befooled by temporal prosper-
 ity, as to imagine, that any little elevation
 they can attain on this footstool, relaxes
 their obligation to serve God so strictly as
 meaner men do? They may imagine it;
 and when we survey the upper ranks of
 life, we find too just cause to suspect, that
 this absurd and impious conceit is enter-
 tained by many: but the faithful and true
 witness hath assured us, "that unto whom-
 "soever much is given, of them much
 "will be required;" and that the greater
 talent, if not faithfully improved, shall
 only heighten the condemnation of its pos-
 sessor, and intitle him to more and hea-
 vier stripes. Once more, let me ask,
 4thly, What is it that gives the highest
 value to every thing in your esteem?
 "One thing have I desired of the Lord,"
 said David, "and that will I seek after,
 "that I may dwell in the house of the
 "Lord all the days of my life, to behold
 "the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire
 "in his temple."—"I count all things
 "but loss," said the holy Apostle Paul, "for
 "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ"

"Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suf-
 "fered the loss of all things, and do
 "count them but dung that I may win
 "Christ." If you are sincerely devoted
 to the Lord Redeemer, you will value
 other things, in exact proportion to
 their connection with him, and the rela-
 tion they bear to him. You will prefer
 the Bible to all other books, because it is
 the word, the testament, of your Lord.
 You will rejoice at every return of the
 Sabbath, because it is the Lord's day. You
 will delight in his saints, and account
 them the "excellent ones in the earth,"
 because they are dear to your Lord, and
 bear his image. Prayer will be your
 sweetest entertainment, because it is the
 means of correspondence and intercourse
 with your Lord: And doing good to the
 bodies, and more especially to the souls of
 men, will be relished by you as the most
 pleasant and honourable employment, be-
 cause it renders you most like unto your
 Lord, "who went about doing good,"
 leaving us an example that we should fol-
 low his steps. And thus will you estimate
 all other things. These,

These, and such like questions, I would have you to put to your own hearts, as in the presence of that God who is already perfectly acquainted with you; who will shortly cause you to know yourselves, and will make all others to know you too, in that day when every disguise shall be torn off, and your real character shall be published in the presence of an assembled world.

I SHALL conclude this discourse with reminding you of those peculiar obligations that lie upon all who name the name of Christ, to *live unto the Lord* in the manner I have endeavoured to describe.

1st, Unless we *live unto the Lord*, we shall counteract the very design of that marvellous love he hath manifested towards us, in giving himself for us an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling favour. “He bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness.”—“He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”—“He

“died

"died for all, that they who live," by
 the merit of his death, "should not hence-
 forth live unto themselves, but unto
 him who died for them, and rose a-
 gain." This is so much insisted upon
 in the New-Testament writings, that the
 Socinians have represented it as the *sole* end
 for which our Lord both lived and died.
 But though we justly maintain, in oppo-
 sition to them, that the death of Christ
 was, in the strictest propriety of language,
 a true propitiatory sacrifice, for expiating
 the guilt of sin, and rendering the exercise
 of mercy to the sinner consistent with the
 holiness and justice of God; yet in expres-
 sing our abhorrence of their error, we must
 beware of running into the opposite ex-
 treme: for nothing can be more clearly
 asserted in the oracles of truth, than that
 "the Son of God was manifested for this
 purpose, that he might destroy the
 works of the devil;" or, in other words,
 that he might prepare men for heaven, by
 the sanctifying influences of his Spirit, as
 well as that he might purchase a heaven
 for them by the merit of his blood. And
 it deserves particular notice, that though
 the main difficulty the first preachers of
 Christianity

Christianity had to struggle with, among their own countrymen, was to bring them off from a proud dependence upon their own righteousness, that they might rely upon Christ alone for pardon and acceptance; yet in declaring this doctrine, they never failed to establish the inseparable connection between faith and holiness, lest any should turn the grace of God unto wantonness; and by claiming the privileges of the gospel, while they refused subjection to its laws, should represent Christ as the minister of sin.

2dly, We are further obliged *to live unto the Lord*, as we regard the honour of our master, and the credit of that saving religion which he taught. For hereby we most effectually stop the mouths of gain-sayers, and cut off occasion from those that desire occasion to blaspheme that worthy name by which we are called; presenting to their view a convincing proof, that Christianity is an effectual means of salvation, and that Christ is truly and properly a Saviour. The death of Christ appears to have a mighty efficacy indeed, when it maketh those that believe on him to die unto sin. And it is impossible to doubt,

doubt, that he is alive, and hath all power committed to him in heaven and in earth, when he visibly lives in his members by his all-conquering grace, and causeth them to live unto him: Whereas a contrary behaviour doth the greatest possible injury to the cause of truth, furnishing the world with a handle to say, that Christianity is nothing more than an airy speculation, and that the religion of Jesus is of no effect towards reforming the hearts and lives of its professors.

3dly, I shall only add, that we are bound to live in the manner I described by the strictest ties of justice and equity. "Ye are not your own," saith our apostle, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. "for ye are bought with a price." From whence he draws this practical inference, "Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are Gods." As creatures who derived their being from God, we are bound to love him with all our heart, and to serve him to the utmost extent of the powers he hath given us. But his redeeming grace brings us under a new and still more endearing obligation to his service. When we had destroyed ourselves, and lay exposed

fed to all the dreadful effects of his righteous displeasure, having no eye to pity, and no hand that could help us, then did he pity us, and his own arm brought salvation. He issued forth the gracious command, "Deliver them from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom."

And in the fulness of time, our Lord Jesus Christ, "the Lamb slain" in decree "from the foundation of the world," appeared in our nature; and with the infinite price of his own precious blood, redeemed us from the hand of justice, and purchased for us complete and everlasting salvation.

And now, with what face can we decline his service, or refuse subjection to any of his laws? It is purely by his merit that we live at all: and shall we reckon it grievous to walk by his direction? Surely nothing can appear more just and equitable, than that he who bought us should possess us, and that the ransomed should be entirely devoted to their Redeemer.

LET these considerations prevail with us to live unto him, who "died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." And

while we look up to him for that divine aid, which he hath not only encouraged us to ask, but commanded us to expect, let us go forward in his strength, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only; that when we die, we may fall asleep in that Jesus, unto whom we now live, and commit our bodies to the dust, in the assured hope of a glorious resurrection; when that promise shall be fulfilled in its largest extent, "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and *where I am, there shall also my servant be.* If any man serve me, him will my Father honour." *Amen.*

SER-

S E R M O N XV.

I PETER, v. 7.

Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.

EXhortations of this kind, which frequently occur in the sacred scriptures, represent our holy religion in the most amiable light. It appears, in all respects, suited to our present necessities, and friendly to our highest, our most important interests. How deplorable would be the state of men upon earth, were they left to struggle in their own strength with the trials and sufferings to which they are continually exposed? In prosperity, when the mind is vigorous and undisturbed, Reason may discover a variety of arguments for bearing affliction with patience and fortitude; and may even suggest some topics of consolation; which, in the distant view of adversity, seem to promise a sea-

sonable and effectual relief: but these are rather specious than solid; and when brought to the test, have always been complained of as feeble and unavailing. The best of them are those which lead our thoughts upwards to the supreme disposer of all events, the wise and righteous governor of the world. But as it is impossible for a creature, conscious of guilt, to separate the idea of punishment from suffering, it is not easy to conceive, how the mere persuasion, that our sufferings proceed from one who is incapable of doing wrong, should yield us any comfort, unless we were assured, that while he punisheth our sins, he is at the same time willing to be reconciled to us; nay, that the correction itself is the fruit of his love, and graciously intended for the cure of our souls. But here Reason, unassisted, is unable to move one step upon firm ground: and though it could, yet as the mind itself is too commonly unhinged and broken by adversity, any aid that depended upon a process of reasoning would come by far too slow to our relief. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?"

In this distressed situation, when every other refuge fails, divine revelation comes seasonably to our assistance. So bright are the objects it presents to our view, that they prevent the labour of a tedious inquiry. The mind sees them at once, and though greatly disturbed, can, with ease, discover both their nature and their use. The import of a striking fact, is much sooner comprehended than the force of an argument. Thus when we are told, that "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us," we not sooner hear and believe the fact, than we are sufficiently prepared to draw the same conclusion from it that Paul did, "How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" But the scriptures do not stop here. They not only relate what God hath already done, and thereby furnish us with proofs of his mercy and grace; they likewise contain explicit declarations of what he hath purposed and determined to do. They abound with great and precious promises, confirmed by the oath of an unchangeable God, "that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, they may have

“ have a strong consolation, who have fled
 “ for refuge to lay hold on the hope set
 “ before them.”

Of this kind is the argument with which the apostle presseth the exhortation in my text, *Casting all your care upon God*, saith he, *FOR he careth for you*. Nothing can be more simple, and at the same time nothing can be more persuasive. No acuteness is requisite for discovering the meaning of the argument. And then its strength is irresistible: “ For if God be with us, “ who can be against us ? ” If the great Lord of heaven and earth vouchsafe to become our friend, nay, our guardian, then surely, with a chearful and unreserved confidence, we may resign ourselves wholly to his disposal and government. The objects of his paternal care must always be safe; no real evil can befall them, neither shall any thing that is truly good be withheld from them. — But to whom doth the apostle address his exhortation ?

This question is of importance, and must be answered in the *first* place,

Secondly, I shall lay open the nature and extent of the duty here enjoined, and shew

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what is included in *casting all our care upon God.*

Thirdly, I shall illustrate the propriety and strength of the motive with which the exhortation is enforced, *God careth for you.*

And then direct you to the practical improvement of the subject.

NOTHING would give me greater pleasure, than to say to every one that hears me, Thou art the person who art invited to *cast thy care upon God*: but it is truth, and not inclination, that must dictate what I say. The great prophet of the church compares the office of a minister to that of a steward, whose business it is to feed those committed to his care, by giving unto each "his portion of meat in due season." A promiscuous distribution of the bread of life, is not merely unprofitable, but in many cases, hurtful to the souls of men: And give me leave to add, that in no case is it more likely to be hurtful, than when the subject, like the present one, is soothing and agreeable. And therefore, that this word of truth may be rightly divided, it will be necessary,

I. IN

I. In the *first* place, To inquire who the persons are to whom the exhortation may properly be addressed.

It is certain, that as there are *privileges* peculiar to sanctified believers, so there are many *duties* enjoined in scripture; which the impenitent and unbelieving are incapable of performing; and, I apprehend, there is no duty whatsoever that lies farther beyond their reach, than the exercise of trust and hope in God; for every part of his word denounces wrath against them so long as they persist in their rebellion and enmity. "God is angry with the wicked every day. He hath bent his bow, and made it ready; he hath also prepared for him the instruments of death." And therefore, to persons of this character, a previous exhortation is necessary. I must address you in the words of Eliphaz to Job, "Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace, and hereby good shall come unto you." At present my text doth not speak to you at all. If you look back to the foregoing part of this epistle, you will see the persons described whom the apostle had in his eye. He doth not write to all promiscuously, but "to the elect,

"elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Christ." He writes to those "who were born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." He addresseth his exhortation to believers in Christ Jesus, "who loved him though unseen," having tasted of his grace; whom he distinguisheth by the honourable appellations of "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." These are the objects of God's paternal care; and they only are qualified to *cast their care upon him*.

I speak not thus to drive any, even the worst of you, away from God, or to discourage your application to him when trouble overtakes you. A time of distress is a very proper season for seeking acquaintance with God. His rod hath a voice as well as his word, and both speak the same language, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" All I affirm is, that you cannot *cast your care upon God*, till your acquaintance with him be begun: and by

telling you, that the saints are possessed of privileges which at present do not belong to you, my sole aim is, "to provoke you to jealousy," as Paul expresseth it, and to make you ambitious to cast in your lot with "these excellent ones in the earth," that ye also may partake of their joy. "This is the command of God," and the first in order under the gospel-dispensation, "that we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ:" and it is only in consequence of our obedience to this command, that we obtain an interest in the blessings he hath purchased. Christ is that unspeakable comprehensive gift, in which all other gifts are virtually included. It is our thankful acceptance of the Mediator of the covenant, that both manifests our claim to the promises of the covenant, and qualifies us to perform the duties it requires. — From this account of the persons who are invited to *cast their care upon God*, we shall, with greater ease and certainty, discover,

II. The nature and extent of the duty itself; which is the *second* thing I proposed to illustrate.

It differs entirely, in its *nature*, from that carelessness and insensibility which the bulk of mankind too generally indulge. Many indeed enjoy a fatal tranquillity, having no concern at all about their eternal interests. Their inquiries are abundantly anxious with regard to the things of a present life; saying, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" But they were never brought in good earnest to ask the infinitely more interesting question, "What shall we do to be saved?" Or if at any time a serious thought, tending to this inquiry, force itself upon their minds, they immediately encounter it with a presumptuous hope of the divine mercy, and endeavour to persuade themselves, by some fallacious reasonings, that it may be well with them at last, though they go on in their trespasses. Now the faith of such persons is not only dead in itself, but likewise poisonous and killing to their souls. They are perishing, and will not believe it, till the unquenchable fire awaken them from their security, and put it out of their power to deceive themselves any longer.

We must not cast our *work* upon God, and

presume, that he will save us in the way of sloth, and carnal indulgence: on the contrary, we are commanded "to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." It is only "in well-doing" that we can regularly "commit the keeping of our souls to God," as the apostle hath taught us in the close of the preceding chapter. We are exhorted to cast our care upon him, not that we may enjoy the base rest of the sluggard, "who desireth and hath nothing, because his hands refuse to labour;" but that having got our hearts enlarged, and freed from a load that pressed them down, we may quicken our pace, and run with greater alacrity in the way of God's commandments.

The character of the persons to whom this exhortation is addressed, doth likewise serve to limit the *extent* of the duty. It is not every sort of care that we are invited or permitted to cast upon God, but only the care of those things which the Christian dare avow in the presence of his Father, and humbly ask of him by prayer and supplication. We read, Matth. xviii. at the beginning, that the disciples of our Lord came to him in a body, inquiring which

which of them should be "greatest in the kingdom of heaven." This was a vain self-interested anxiety, to which our Lord gave a sharp and sudden check, by telling them in plain terms, that till they should lay aside that ambitious *care*, they were not fit to possess the *lowest* place in his kingdom. "He called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, that except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—We have an account of another very *careful* man, Luke xiii. 16.—20. where his picture is drawn with inimitable strength. He is represented in a musing posture, thinking within himself, and saying, "What shall I do?" The question betrays the greatest uneasiness and perplexity. A poor starving beggar, who had not a morsel of bread, nor knew where to find it, could have said nothing more expressive of distrust and anxiety. And what do you really think ailed this man? Did he want bread? Quite the contrary; he had got too much: his barns were not large enough to contain the product of his ground: "I have no
"room,"

“room,” said he, “where to bestow my
“fruits.” And it was this that made him
cry out, “What shall I do?” If you de-
fire any further information concerning
him, you will find it at vers. 20. “But
“God said unto him, *Thou fool*, this night
“thy soul shall be required of thee: then
“whose shall those things be which thou
“hast provided?” It would appear, that
his situation with respect to an heir was si-
milar to what Solomon describes, Ecclef.
iv. 8. “There is one alone, and there is
“not a second; yea, he hath neither child
“nor brother: yet there is no end of all
“his labour,” &c. But whatever became
of his *fruits*, we know that his *folly* proved
a lasting estate, for it continues to be the
inheritance of many at this day. I believe
there are numbers among ourselves, whose
minds are continually on the rack, so that
they cannot sleep, with laying schemes a-
bout the merest trifles in the world. In
this age of gaiety and frivolous ostentation,
I make no doubt, that the superfluities of
dress, furniture, equipage, and the like,
employ the thoughts of the rich (or of
people of fashion, whether they be rich
or not) as anxiously, as the clothing that
is

is necessary to cover their nakedness employs the thoughts of the poor and destitute. It is the care of some to overtop their neighbours: it is the care of others to over-reach at gaming; and indeed the mind of a gamester must be in perpetual suspense and agitation.—Surely I need not tell you, that it would be impious to *cast such cares upon God*. We are not at liberty to chuse at random whatsoever is agreeable to fancy or appetite; and when our passions are enflamed, and our hearts overcharged with disquieting cares, attempt to roll these over upon God. We must first examine the object of our desire, whether it be good in itself, and fit for us; whether it be consistent with and subservient to our spiritual interest: and if, upon inquiry, it shall appear that these qualifications are wanting, we must neither cast the care of it upon God, nor keep it to ourselves, but throw it away altogether; praying, that our folly may be forgiven, our diseased affections healed, and led forth to other objects more worthy of our pursuit. This being laid down, then, as a fundamental principle, that the object of our desire must be lawful and good, the

practice

practice of the duty which my text recommends, may be considered as including the following particulars.

1st, A stedfast persuasion, that all events are ordered and directed by God; that we and all our interests are continually in his hand; and that nothing can befall us without his appointment or permission. This was the foundation of David's confidence, when he said, "Into thine hands
" I commit my spirit: Thou hast redeemed
" ed me, O Lord God of truth.—I have
" heard the slander of many, fear was on
" every side, while they took counsel to-
" gether against me, they devised to take
" away my life. But I trusted in thee, O
" Lord: I said, Thou art my God, my times
" are in thy hand." Herein lies the difference betwixt the judgement of sanctified believers, and that of worldly men: The last, confining their views to the objects of sense, place their whole dependence upon weak and mutable creatures like themselves. They court the smiles, and tremble at the frowns, of those who are raised a little above them; and have no higher aim, than to recommend themselves to the favour and protection of such persons

persons as are most likely to gratify their ambition or covetousness: Whereas the believer, knowing that God is supreme, and that the highest creatures are only instruments which he employs at his pleasure, keeps his eye continually fixed upon him, and hath no other concern, than to be found walking in those ways which he hath appointed; being fully assured, that all events of whatever kind, are ordered by his reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, and shall infallibly work together for his spiritual improvement in this state of discipline, and issue in his complete and everlasting felicity.

2dly, To cast our care upon God, is to make his will the guide and measure of ours. We may desire, we may ask, what appears to us good in its own nature, and conducive either to our comfort or usefulness in a present world; we may lawfully wish to be delivered from trouble, to enjoy health of body, composure and cheerfulness of mind, the pleasures of virtuous friendship, and a competent portion of the good things of this life: but still we must desire and ask these blessings with due submission to the will of God, leaving it en-

tirely to his unerring wisdom to "give or to with-hold them, as seemeth good unto himself." We have a lovely example of this temper in the behaviour of David upon a very trying occasion. When the unexpected rebellion of his unnatural son Absalom, which threatened him with the immediate loss, not of his crown only, but also of his life, obliged him to leave Jerusalem in haste; we are told, that among the few that accompanied him in his flight towards the wilderness, was Zadock the priest, and with him all the Levites, bearing the ark of the covenant of God. In this time of great distress, when his situation was so affecting, that, as we read, 2 Sam. xv. 23. "all the country wept with a loud voice," while they beheld him passing over the brook Kidron, the sacred historian informs us, vers. 25. 26. that the King addressed Zadock in the following words: "Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee: behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him."

“him.” — What shall be the issue of this formidable conspiracy I know not; but I *cast my care*, my all, upon my God: in the mean time, let the ark of the covenant be carried back to its place. The *presence* of the God of Israel is not confined to this symbol of his grace, and *that* I trust shall encompass me whithersoever I go, to support and cheer me in this melancholy flight. Whether or not I shall be restored to my house and throne, I cannot at present foresee; but this I know, that in either case it shall be well with me. If I return to Jerusalem, I shall again behold this ark, and enjoy the Lord my God in his ordinances; but if my God hath no further service for me on this earth, I shall go to that place where there is no occasion for external means of correspondence and intercourse: Behold, here I lie at the disposal of my Father and my King, equally prepared to live or to die; to reign once more in the earthly Jerusalem, or to take up my eternal residence in the Jerusalem that is above. — This unlimited resignation to the will of God, makes an essential part of the duty which my text recommends. — It further implies,

3dly, That we renounce all confidence in the creature, and place our trust in God alone. — We are required, you see, to cast ALL our care upon him; not a part, but the whole. For thus it is written, Jer. xvii. 5.—8. “Curfed be the man that
 “trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his
 “arm, and whose heart departeth from
 “the Lord. For he shall be like the heath
 “in the desert, and shall not see when
 “good cometh, and shall inhabit the
 “parched places in the wilderness in a salt
 “land and not inhabited.” Whereas,
 “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the
 “Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.
 “For he shall be as a tree planted by the
 “waters, and that spreadeth out her roots
 “by the river, and shall not see when heat
 “cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and
 “shall not be careful in the year of
 “drought, neither shall cease from yield-
 “ing fruit.” A divided trust between
 God and the creature, is as foolish and
 unsafe, as to set one foot upon a rock, and
 the other upon the quicksand. We must,
 as I formerly observed, be diligent in the
 use of means; for thus the commandment
 runs, “Trust in the Lord, and do good;”
 but

but at the same time we must look beyond, and above all means, to God himself for success; saying, as David did, "My soul wait thou *only* upon God: for my expectation is from him. He *only* is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge is on God."—Once more, in the 4th place, To cast all our care upon God, implies a full and unsuspecting dependence upon his wisdom and goodness; such a dependence as quiets the mind, disposing it to wait patiently upon God, and to accept, with thankfulness, whatsoever he is pleased to appoint. The Christian who hath learned this important lesson, not only brings his cares to the throne of grace, but there also he leaves them, and, like Hannah, returns with his countenance no more sad. Having "by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, made his requests known to God," his mind is at rest; "he is careful for nothing:" he hath put all his interests into the best hands: he hath committed them to one, who is too wise to bestow what is hurtful, and too

kind

kind to with-hold what is good. In consequence whereof, "the peace of God that passeth all understanding, keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ." This gracious temper brings not only rest, but liberty to the soul. It breaks all those fetters in pieces, by which the covetous, the ambitious, the voluptuous, are chained to a present world, and dragged at the heels of those worse than Egyptian task-masters, "the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life." Whatever God willeth, is pleasing to the sanctified believer; and the light of his Father's countenance, amidst the deepest and most complicated distress, puts greater gladness into his heart, than the sensualist can feel, or is capable of conceiving, when his corn and wine do most abound. It is this that gives the Christian the true enjoyment of life. No man can have the proper relish of any earthly comfort, who is not prepared to part with it. This looks like a paradox; but will be found, upon examination, to be a weighty truth. Where fear is, there is torment: and nothing mars our joy so effectually, as the prospect of being separated from what we greatly love.

Talk

Talk to a carnal man of death, and the poor creature's spirit dies within him: the awful prospect of dissolution, like the hand-writing upon the wall which Belshazzar perceived, while he was drinking wine with his princes, his wives, and his concubines, will, in the height of his gaiety, change his countenance, loosen the joints of his loins, and make his knees to smite one against another. Whereas the man who hath been taught to *cast his care upon God*, can sit chearfully at the feast which Providence affords him, and think of his dying hour, without diminishing the relish of his present enjoyment. Like David, Psal. xxiii. he can look forward without dismay, to his walk through the valley and shadow of death; and while the gloomy object is in his eye, he can say to his God with thankful praise, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over: surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

Thus have I opened the meaning of the exhortation,

exhortation, and at the same time attempted to give you a general view of the dignity and excellence of the temper it recommends. But the most persuasive motive to the practice of this duty, is that which the apostle himself maketh use of in the close of the verse, where he giveth full assurance to believers in Christ, that God, in a peculiar manner, *careth for them.*—

To this I shall proceed in my next discourse.—May God lead us by his Spirit to the knowledge of our duty, and dispose us by his grace to the love and practice of it, for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

SER.

exhortation, and at the same time attempt-
ed to give you a general view of the digni-
ty and excellence of the temper it recom-

S E R M O N XVI.

to the practice of this duty, is that which
the apostle himself exhorts us to in the
close of the epistle, where he giveth full as-

*Casting all your care upon him, for he careth
for you.*

These words contain a pressing exhor-
tation to an important duty, and a
most persuasive argument to enforce the
practice of it. It was an apostle of Christ
who gave the exhortation, and he address-
ed it to believers in Christ: not to those
who barely professed Christianity in oppo-
sition to Heathenism, but to real saints, as
distinguished from mere nominal Chri-
stians, who "have a form of godliness,
"but deny the power thereof." What
their condition was with respect to exter-
nal things, partly appears from the inscrip-
tion of the epistle, where they are called
"strangers, scattered abroad throughout
"Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and
"Bithynia." Such persons were not like-
ly to enjoy much worldly ease or affluence:

and indeed we have positive evidence that they did not; for we are told expressly, that "they were in heaviness through manifold temptations;" reproached as evil doers, and cruelly persecuted for the name of Christ. Nay, as if these trials had been only the beginning of sorrows, the apostle forewarns them, at the 12th verse of the preceding chapter, that they were soon to enter upon a new scene of sufferings; the severity of which should far exceed any thing they had yet felt: "Beloved," saith he, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

We can hardly doubt, that such an awful prospect would beget many anxious disquieting thoughts. *Cares* it behoved them to have; not about the trivial accommodations of a present life, *theirs* would be of a more serious and important nature:—How they should quit themselves like men, and maintain their ground against the craft of seducers, and the serious

rious attacks of persecuting zeal;—how they should adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, and “cut off occasion from those who desired occasion to blaspheme that worthy name by which they were called;—”above all, how they should recommend religion to the esteem and choice of their enemies, and become the instruments of saving from eternal death, those who thirsted for their own blood, and treated them like the filth and off-scouring of all things.—Such, we may suppose, would be the principal cares of persecuted saints; and all these they are exhorted to cast upon God: *For, adds the apostle, God careth for you.*

This is the argument which I shall now endeavour to illustrate,

1. By laying before you the evidence of its truth; and,

2. By shewing its propriety and strength for engaging us to *cast our care upon God.*

IN WHEN we consider the character of the persons to whom this exhortation was originally addressed, it will readily occur to us, that the apostle means something more by the *care* of God, than that gene-

ral Providence which extends to all the creatures he hath made. The *care* he speaks of, is that peculiar and affectionate regard to the saints which he had before described, chap. iii. 12. "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." — Thus it is written, that he withdraweth not his eye from the righteous." — "The Lord is God," saith the Prophet Nahum, "a strong hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him." Many other passages might be quoted, which assert, in the most explicit terms, that God *careth* for his saints in another manner than he doth for the rest of the world. — But that you may have a more extensive and encouraging view of the evidence of this truth, consider

How intimately the saints are related to God. "Behold," saith the Apostle John in name of all the faithful, "behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the *sons* of God." Nor is this a mere title of honour: the persons on whom it

is conferred are invested with a full and unalterable Right to all those privileges which the title imports; for, as St Paul reasons, "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." And can it be supposed, that the Father of mercies will abandon his own offspring? Do earthly parents care for their children? and can he who hath implanted that disposition in their nature, be unconcerned about those whom he hath adopted into his family, and regenerated by his Spirit? Is it possible, that the streams should have more sweetness than the fountain whence they flow? No surely. "If men being evil, know how to give good gifts to their children, much more will the Father of mercies give good things unto them that ask him." And is not this a solid ground of confidence and hope? Every believer in Christ may expect all from God, and infinitely more, than any child can expect from the most affectionate and tender-hearted parent upon earth. — But this is not all; for

Our Father in heaven hath in a manner laid open his heart to us, and told us plainly what we may lawfully ask and hope

hope to obtain. He hath published his good-will in a variety of great and precious promises; promises that extend to all the necessities of his children; in so much that be their condition what it will, they may find some gracious declaration of what God hath purposed to do; which suits their case with as much precision and exactness, as if their particular distress had been the immediate occasion of it. Or if any calamity should present itself to their imagination, against which no effectual provision appears to have been made, there is one promise upon record, to which the believing soul may at all times retreat, Rom. viii. 28. "We know that
 "all things work together for good, to
 "them that love God, to them who are
 "the called according to his purpose."
 These are the words of him who is unchangeable, "the same yesterday, to-day,
 "and for ever, without any variableness
 "or shadow of turning." Hear what he saith, Is. xlix. 15. "Can a woman forget
 "her sucking child, that she should not
 "have compassion on the son of her
 "womb? yea, they may forget, yet will
 "I not forget thee." And that we may
 have

have fuller assurance of this, we are told by the Prophet Malachi, "that a book of remembrance is written before God, for them that fear the Lord, and that think upon his name." Nay, the scriptures inform us, that there is one in heaven, infinitely dear to the Father, who is not only a faithful remembrancer, but a powerful advocate, and unwearied intercessor, in behalf of all "who come to God by him." And this may be considered as an additional ground of assurance, that believers are the objects of God's peculiar care. "We have a great high priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, who constantly appears in the presence of God for us." Thus John beheld him in vision, "standing in the midst of the throne, as a lamb that had been slain," displaying those wounds which he received, when "he bore our sins in his own body on the tree," as so many mouths filled with the most prevailing arguments for mercy and grace to his redeemed ones, whom he then did, and still doth, represent. We have a specimen of his intercession recorded by that apostle

apostle in the 17th chapter of his gospel ; where, among other tender and affectionate requests, we find the following remarkable words : “ Now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me.— I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.— Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.” — In such terms did our Lord recommend his immediate followers, and all his disciples in succeeding generations, to the protection and care of his heavenly Father. And may not this beget in us the fullest and most joyful assurance, that God doth, and always will, care for them ? — And still more, when we consider, that he who thus intercedes in their behalf, is himself possessed of all power in heaven, and in earth, and is constituted head over all things for the church. “ I am he,” said he, “ that was dead, and am now alive, and behold I live for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death.”

S E R M O N XVI. 385

These are some of the evidences which the scriptures afford us, that God careth for sanctified believers. The relation he bears to them, the promises he hath given them, the constant prevailing intercession of his Son, together with the power committed to him as King of Zion, all concur to secure this important benefit.

But I have further to add, that we have the evidence of *facts*, as well as of arguments, to establish our faith of the divine care and protection. The sacred records bear witness, that God hath been the dwelling-place of his people in all generations, and give us abundant reason to say, with David, "Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded." And God is always in one mind: "He is the rock, his work is perfect, and all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he."

What signal appearances hath he made in every age for the protection and safety of his peculiar people? Nothing can be conceived more formidable than Pharaoh's

preparation against the Israelites; the whole strength of an extensive and potent empire employed against an undisciplined company of fugitives, who had long been dispirited by oppression and slavery; but though the bush was all in a flame, yet it was not consumed: "When the enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my lust shall be satisfied on them, I will draw the sword, my hand shall destroy them;" then the sea opened a passage for their escape, and overwhelmed their enemies; "God did blow with his wind, the sea covered them, they sank as lead in the mighty waters." — How wonderful were the steps of Joseph's advancement, to which his father and brethren owed their preservation in a time of famine? And no less wonderful was the defeat of Haman's wicked attempt to cut off the whole nation of the Jews as one man. In either case, the failing of one circumstance would have varied the event; and yet each circumstance in both, when viewed apart, seems purely accidental; nay, some of them appear at first sight rather adverse than favourable. And lest any should imagine, that

that these, and other deliverances of the like nature, were really casual, and therefore no proofs of God's gracious protection; let it be observed, that in two of the instances I have mentioned, the events were the direct and immediate answers of prayer. Thus the Red sea was divided, when Moses, and the children of Israel, "cried unto the Lord." And Haman's plot was detected and broken on that very day which Esther and Mordecai had set apart for fasting and prayer. To which I may add, that Asa obtained a complete victory over his enemies, after he had uttered that fervent supplication, "Help us, O Lord our God." And the Apostle Peter was brought out of prison by the ministry of an angel, on that very night when prayer was offered up by the church in his behalf.

You see, then, upon the whole, that the truth of the apostle's assertion in the text, is supported and confirmed by every kind of evidence we could wish to obtain.

Let us now consider, when we have seen the propriety and force of the argument, for engaging us to cast our care

upon God. This branch of the subject will need little illustration. For, *1st*, If God careth for us, then we have one to care for us who is infinitely wise, who is perfectly acquainted with all our wants, and can never mistake in judging what is best for us. We may chuse many things apparently good, the possession of which would prove hurtful to our souls; for, as Solomon observed long ago, (and daily experience confirms the observation), "no man knoweth what is good for man in this life." There are many latent seeds of corruption in our hearts that we do not at present suspect, and perhaps shall never discover, unless a proper temptation bring them forth to our view. David, whose conscience was so tender in the wilderness, that it smote him for cutting off the skirt of Saul's garment, continued insensible for a long time under the most aggravated guilt, after he was fixed in the peaceable possession of the throne. Hezekiah, whose devotion was so humble and ardent in the time of his sickness, waxed proud and vainglorious when restored to health; insomuch that "he brought wrath upon himself, and upon Judah, and upon Jerusalem."

Jerusalem.' Many who, in a low estate, were humane and kind, and did good with the little they possessed, have been so intoxicated with the full cup of prosperity, that, for a season at least, they have forgotten themselves, their neighbour, nay their God, and become quite the reverse of what they formerly appeared to be. One thing is certain, that if left to our own choice, we should never feel distress or affliction of any kind; and yet the scriptures assure us, and our own observation may convince us of the truth of it, that adversity is more friendly to religion than prosperity. Our diseased nature requires bitter medicines much oftener than cordials; even the best need frequently to be dieted, and brought low, to keep their feverish passions and appetites within bounds. Now God is perfectly acquainted with all the tendencies of our nature, and can therefore judge with unerring skill what things are best for us, and most conducive to our interest. He knows what measure of health, or riches, or honours, we shall be able to bear, or be disposed to improve; when, and in what proportion, pain or sickness, or poverty, or reproach, are necessary

cessary to expel some spiritual distemper,
 to exercise and strengthen some languish-
 ing grace, or to make room in the heart
 for his own divine presence. Again, let
 our enemies plot against us in the most se-
 cret manner, let them shut themselves up
 in the closest retirement; yet it is impos-
 sible for them to hide their consultations
 from God, "who discovereth deep things
 "out of darkness, and bringeth to light
 "the shadow of death." When Benhadad
 had failed in his repeated attempts to cut
 off the armies of Israel by surprise, his
 heart was sore troubled; and suspecting
 treachery in his own court, he called his
 servants together, and said unto them,
 "Will ye not shew me which of us is for
 "the King of Israel?" To which one of
 his servants replied, "None, my Lord, O
 "King; but Elisha, the prophet that is in
 "Israel, telleth the King of Israel the words
 "that thou speakest in thy bed-chamber."
 Nay, he can preserve his people from the
 effects of their own folly, as well as from
 the craft and malice of their enemies.
 "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the
 "godly out of temptation."—"He leadeth
 "the blind in a way that they know not;"
 —"he

"he giveth understanding to the simple;" — "the meek will he guide in judgement, the meek will he teach his way." And if infinite wisdom take the disposal of our lot, if he who cannot err, vouchsafe to become both our guardian and our guide, with what unsuspecting trust may we commit ourselves into his hands, and chearfully acquiesce in all the determinations of his providence? Especially when we consider,

2dly, That his power is equal to his wisdom. "Whatsoever the Lord pleaseth that doth he, in heaven, in the earth, and in the sea, and in all deep places." He causeth the wrath of man to praise him; and the remainder thereof he is able to restrain. All the power of the creatures is derived from him, and dependent upon him. The haughtiest tyrant upon earth is only the rod of his anger, which he employs for a season, and then breaketh in pieces, and throws it away. When Pilate said to our Lord, "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?" he at once detected and reprov'd his ignorance and pride, by answering him, "Thou couldst have no power

"power at all against me, except it were
 "given thee from above."—And as the
 power of God is supreme, so is it likewise
 everlasting. "The Lord, the creator of
 "the ends of the earth, fainteth not, nei-
 "ther is weary." His arm is never short-
 ened that it cannot save, neither age nor
 exercise can impair its vigour; what he
 did yesterday he can do to-day, and re-
 peat it as often as his people have occasion
 for it. This was the foundation of that
 expostulatory address, Is. li. 9. "Awake,
 "awake, put on strength, O arm of the
 "Lord; awake as in the ancient days, in
 "the generations of old. Art not thou it
 "that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the
 "dragon?" To which God replied, "I,
 "even I, am he that comforteth you:
 "who art thou then that thou shouldst
 "be afraid of a man that shall die, and of
 "the son of man which shall be made as
 "grass? and forgettest the Lord thy ma-
 "ker, that hath stretched forth the hea-
 "vens, and laid the foundations of the
 "earth? and hast feared continually eve-
 "ry day, because of the fury of the op-
 "pressor, as if he were ready to destroy?
 "And where is the fury of the oppressor?—

"I

"I am the Lord thy God, that divided the sea, whose waters roared: the Lord of hosts is my name."—His power reacheth to the heart of man, to which no creature can have immediate access: even the hearts of kings are in his hand, and he turneth them as the rivers of water. Thus he promised to Jeremiah, "that he would cause the enemy to intreat him well in the day of evil." Who but the Lord of man's heart could have said unto Moab, and said it with efficacy, "Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler?" Thus, when it pleaseth him, he can open a sanctuary for his people in the midst of their foes, and make these very foes the protectors of his people. In short, "with God all things are possible." He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. This good old Jacob gratefully acknowledged, when he met with his darling son Joseph, whose supposed death he had long and bitterly lamented: "I had not thought to see thy face, and lo! God hath shewed me thy children also." When the apostles had the sentence of death in themselves,

God dispelled their fears, and preserved their lives, in spite of all the rage and cunning of their persecutors. And thus, "in the mount of the Lord" it hath often "been seen:" deliverance came when death was expected; or, according to the prophetic style of Zechariah, chap. xiv. 7. "at evening-time:" when, according to the course of nature, nothing was looked for but deepening shades and increasing darkness, "light" hath suddenly sprung up, and the thick clouds have fled and vanished away. Here then is a solid ground of confidence and hope: He *that careth for us*, not only *knoweth* all things, but *can do* all things. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. "Fear not," saith he, "for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Have we not then the most powerful encouragement, to *cast our care, our whole care, upon God?* And still more, when I add,

3dly, That he who is so wise in heart, and mighty in strength; so wonderful in counsel,

counsel, and excellent in working, is likewise possessed of infinite goodness. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. "God is love," said the Apostle John; and well might he say so, who was one of the heralds of that joyful proclamation, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." — Here then is a foundation that is able to carry all the weight a believer can lay upon it; for "if God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" What can he withhold from those upon whom he hath already bestowed his own dear Son, and enabled, by his Spirit, thankfully to receive him as the "unspeakable gift" of God to men. How firm then are the grounds of the believer's hope? With what humble, but triumphant confidence, may he *cast his care upon God*, whose *wisdom* knoweth all things, whose *power* can do all things, and whose unbounded *goodness* doth constantly incline him to bestow every needful blessing upon his people?

As I have made it my business, in every branch of the subject, to keep the persons in your eye to whom the exhortation is addressed, it is almost unnecessary to remind you, in the conclusion, that the comfort of all I have said, must be confined to those who are Christians indeed. None else are the objects of that peculiar care which the apostle speaks of; and therefore to them only the privilege belongs of *casting all their care upon God*. Permit me now to add, that as it is their privilege, so is it likewise their duty; and they dishonour themselves, and reproach their Father, when they give way to anxious disquieting cares upon any account whatever. We may justly say to such, as Jonadab said to Amnon, "Why art thou, 'being the king's son, lean from day to 'day?' Carry all your grievances to him, who is both able and willing to redress them. Make use of thy birthright, O Christian! and *cast thy cares upon him who careth for thee*. Your very reliance upon him, in the way of duty, your leaning upon his arm, if I may so express it, while you are using the appointed means, insures his protection, according to that

gracious

gracious promise, *Isa. xxi. 3.* "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon thee, because he trusteth in thee."

But what shall those do who are of an opposite character? May not they too cast their care upon God, as the God of nature, the father of their spirits, and the former of their bodies, in whom they live and move? Doth not his providence extend to all the creatures he hath made? Doth he not clothe the lilies, and feed the ravens, and hear the lions when they cry to him for food? All this is true, and, in one sense, all men without exception are the objects of his care. But this can yield no comfort to impenitent unbelieving sinners: for the same God who sustains them in life, and gives them what they possess, and most ungratefully abuse, hath expressly declared, "that though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not pass unpunished." I appeal to yourselves, is it reasonable to expect, that God should take the burden of your cares while you deny him your hearts, and even fight against him with the fruits of his bounty? If you think coolly upon the matter, I am almost

almost persuaded you will blush to ask it.

How then are you to dispose of your cares?—What shall I say? I might tell you, that your anxiety will do you no good; and therefore it were best to lay it aside, and take things as they happen, without murmuring. But this were only to amuse you; for the burden would still press you with its weight, and all my reasoning would amount to nothing more, than a cold unavailing advice to struggle with it as you can. But if your cares be very painful, though I cannot encourage you to go directly to God with them in your present state, yet I shall suggest a hint which, by the blessing of God, may be of use to you. It hath often been observed, that one great care will swallow up many others of smaller importance, and even banish them from the mind altogether. Thus in a storm at sea, the most covetous wordlings have been known to throw their most precious goods overboard with their own hands, when no other means could be found to keep the ship above water. This points out a remedy; and it is the only remedy that occurs to me. Were you awakened to a proper concern about
the

the life of your souls, this would have a powerful influence to cure your anxiety about lesser things. Were you brought to cry out with the jailor, "What shall I do to be saved?" you would find neither leisure nor inclination to ask these disquieting anxious questions, "What shall I eat? and what shall I drink? and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" All these would be swallowed up in your concern for "the one thing needful." And give me leave to add, that when this becomes your care, I shall then be at full liberty to invite you to *cast it upon God*; nay, I shall be able to assure you, that he will not only accept the charge, but likewise give you what you care for, even a complete and everlasting salvation. O then "seek the Lord while he is to be found; call upon him while he is near."

MAY God determine and enable you to take this course, and make your worldly cares the means of leading your hearts beyond and above this world, to seek rest and happiness in himself alone. *Amen.*

S E R M O N XVII.

2 CORINTHIANS, xii. 9.

He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee.

IN the foregoing verses of this chapter, the apostle relates an extraordinary revelation he had been favoured with, above fourteen years before the date of this epistle. He informs us, that "he was caught up into paradise," or "the third heaven, (whether in the body, or out of the body, he could not tell), where he heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful, or possible, for a man to utter." This probably happened soon after his conversion; and was graciously intended, either to remove those doubts and fears which the remembrance of his former conduct might naturally occasion, or rather to fortify his mind against the trials and sufferings he was afterwards to meet with in the course

of his ministry. — One should imagine, that such a glorious manifestation could not be liable to any abuse. When Satan would have tempted our Lord to worship him, it was by giving him a sight and offer of all the Kingdoms of *this* world; and we readily admit, that such a temptation might prove very fatal to us. Earthly objects have indeed too powerful a tendency to enflame our sensual appetites, and to alienate our hearts from God; but surely no danger can be apprehended from a view of heaven. The glories of the upper world, a display of those things above, upon which God himself hath commanded us to set our affection, cannot be supposed to have any bad effect.

(And no doubt this will be the case, when we shall be perfectly freed from all remainders of corruption. But we learn, from what follows, that in our present state of weakness and depravity, even a view of heaven might prove a snare to our souls. Holy Paul, as we read, vers. 9. was in danger of being “exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations;” for which cause, “there was given to him a thorn in the flesh,

“the messenger of Satan to buffet him.” What this particular exercise was, is not material for us to know. The words plainly import, that it was both violent and painful; and the effects it produced as evidently shew, that it was appointed in mercy, and wisely calculated for his spiritual advantage. This eminent saint, who but a little before was caught up into paradise, now humbles himself as low as the dust. He falls down upon his knees, and earnestly implores deliverance from this trial. Once and again he repeats his supplication, but gets no answer. This could not fail to heighten his distress. A messenger of Satan is sent to buffet him; and God, by his silence, seems deaf to his intreaties. But still this is made to work for his good: He becomes more and more sensible of his own weakness; he draws nearer to a throne of grace, and renews his suit with increasing fervour and importunity. “For this thing,” says he, vers. 8. “I be-
 “fought the Lord thrice, that it might
 “depart from me.”—At length the an-
 “swer comes in the words of my text: *And
 he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for
 thee.*

You

You will observe, that after all his intreaties, the Lord did not grant him the precise thing he had asked; but he gave him what was better, and more suited to his condition. Paul needed an antidote against spiritual pride; and as the thorn in the flesh was necessary for that end, it would have been no act of kindness to have taken it away; and therefore our Lord, who knew his servant better than he knew himself, prolongs the trial, but at the same time assures him of grace to support him under it.—This messenger of Satan must not be sent away, lest thou shouldst forget thy dependence upon me: but I will stand by thee, and strengthen thee to bear his assaults and buffetings; that feeling thine own weakness, and the power of my grace, thy soul may be kept at an equal distance from *presumption* on the one hand, and from *distrust* on the other; both which extremes are utterly inconsistent with the duties of my service, and the happiness of my people.

According to this view of the words, I propose, in dependence upon divine aid,

I. To guard you against pride and

self-confidence, by giving you a true representation of that weak and impotent state into which we are fallen by our apostasy from God; and,

II. For your encouragement, I shall lead your thoughts to that *all-sufficient grace* which is treasured up in Christ, whereby the weakest of his people are enabled to endure the buffetings of Satan, and shall finally prevail against all their spiritual enemies,

I. THAT I may guard you against pride and self-confidence, I shall lay before you a plain and scriptural account of that weak and impotent state into which we are fallen by our apostasy from God.

It were easy to quote a variety of passages which expressly assert the corruption of human nature, and man's utter inability to do any thing that can be effectual for his own recovery: but I need only appeal to every man who reads the sacred oracles with seriousness and impartiality, whether this doth not appear to be a scripture-doctrine from the very face of the revelation; and the uniform strain of the word of God.

Doth

Doth not the method of salvation by Jesus Christ, necessarily suppose the whole human race to be in a state of guilt, pollution, and weakness? Do not the promises of taking away the heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh, plainly imply, that these works are peculiar to God, and that man is unable to do such great things for himself? Would God command us to pray to him for these inestimable blessings, if we were able to procure them by our own wisdom and strength? nay, would it not be a mocking of God, to apply to him for that which we are already possessed of, or may acquire when we chuse, without his interposition or aid? Besides, are we not told, that "every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights?" Is not our sanctification every where attributed to the Spirit of God? and are not the saints denominated "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that they should walk in them?"—Are not "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," expressly said to be "the fruits of the Spirit?"

"Spirit?" nay, are we not told, that it is, "God who worketh in us to *will*, and to *do* of his good pleasure?" — Surely, my brethren, if we judge of the scriptures by the same rules that we judge of any other book, nay, unless we suppose, that they were artfully contrived to mislead us, we must be sensible, that the absolute necessity of supernatural grace, is not only clearly asserted in scripture, but that this doctrine is so intimately connected with all the other parts of divine revelation, that the whole must stand or fall with it.

This is further confirmed by the concurring testimony of all the saints of whose experiences, in the spiritual life, we have any accounts recorded in scripture. They all join in the most humiliating acknowledgements of their guilt, pollution, and weakness, disclaiming the praise of any good thing that was in them, and ascribing the undivided glory of all that they possessed, or hoped to enjoy, to the free unmerited grace of God. How pathetically did David bewail the corruption of his nature, (Psal. li. 5.)! "Behold, I was *thapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother*"

"mother conceive me." And what a deep sense did he express of his inability to cleanse or purify himself, when he addressed God in such terms as these, vers. 10. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." But lest any should be so injurious as to suspect that David might have spoken after this manner, to apologise for his criminal conduct in the matter of Uriah, which gave occasion to that psalm; let us hear what the Apostle Paul saith of himself, whose character is not liable to any such objection, Rom. vii. 18. *et seqq.* "I know, that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not.—I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." Upon which he cries out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

"death!"—Here then is one, who was
 not behind the very chief apostles, who,
 before his conversion, lived a Pharisee, and
 afterwards could say at the bar of the
 Jewish Sanhedrim, "I have lived in all
 "good conscience before God unto this
 "day;" who, conscious of the grace he
 had received, expressed himself thus in the
 presence of Agrippa, "I would to God,
 "that not only thou, but also all that hear
 "me this day, were both almost and al-
 "together such as I am, except these
 "bonds." Yet this chosen vessel inge-
 nuously confesseth his natural depravity,
 mourns over the remainders of a body of
 sin, and ascribes those eminent gifts and
 graces with which his soul was so remark-
 ably enriched, to God, and to him alone,
 saying, (1 Cor. xv. 10.) "By the grace of
 "God I am what I am: and his grace
 "which was bestowed upon me, was not
 "in vain; but I laboured more abun-
 "dantly than they all: yet not I, but the
 "grace of God which was with me."
 Now what should have induced Paul to
 speak after this manner, if it had not been
 true? Surely this was not the way to
 make a figure in the world. Had that
 been

been his aim, it would have answered his purpose far better, to have represented his high attainments as the fruit of his own labour and diligence, rather than a mere alms to which he had no previous title. Surely nothing but a regard to truth could have drawn from him such humble repeated acknowledgements; and therefore his testimony is altogether beyond exception. And when I add, that he wrote under the immediate direction and influence of the Spirit of God, we are furnished with the most convincing evidence of the absolute necessity of divine grace, for beginning and carrying forward a work of sanctification in the soul of an apostate creature.

They whose religion lies wholly in speculation, who have acquired a refined system of opinions, but never tried in good earnest to reduce them to practice, may dispute against this doctrine, and flatter themselves into a vain conceit of the vigour and sufficiency of the natural powers they possess. But all who are exercised to godliness, who have put their strength to the trial, (and they only are competent judges in a question of this nature), know the truth of what I have been proving,

and will be ready to attest it from their own experience. Nevertheless, as pride is the last part of the old man that dies, it will be profitable even for such persons to "be put in remembrance of these things, though they know them, and be established in the present truth." Have you experienced the power of divine grace? have you tasted and seen that the Lord is good? then surely it is meet that your souls should bless him. But, O be humble! and give check to any self-exalting thoughts. Consider both where, and what, you are. You are still upon earth, part of the wilderness lieth before you, and you must pass through the valley and shadow of death, before you can enter into the promised land. Many seeds of corruption still lodge in your nature; many enemies beset you both within and without; the fiery darts of the wicked one fly thick on every side; and nothing less than omnipotence can protect and sustain you, and carry you forward in safety to the end of your journey. If you trust in any measure to yourselves, if you depend upon the grace you have already received, as if that would be sufficient for the time to come,

come, you shall soon get a proof of your ignorance and folly. You need daily grace, as much as daily bread; for separated from Christ, you can do nothing. Beware, O Christians! of undertaking any thing in your own strength; for that which is begun in self-confidence, will most assuredly end in shame and disappointment. Go forth in the name of the Lord of hosts, saying, with good King Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 21. "O Lord, we know not what to do, but our eyes are towards thee." — And for your encouragement, I shall now,

II. In the *second* place, Lead your thoughts to that all-sufficient grace, which is treasured up in Christ; whereby the weakest of his people are enabled to endure the buffetings of Satan, and shall finally be made to triumph over all their spiritual enemies.

This is a most comfortable doctrine, and cannot fail to beget joy and confidence in every believing soul. How completely wretched would the discovery of our weakness make us, had we no knowledge where help is to be found, or no hope that help

would be granted to us! But blessed be God neither of these is the case. For,

1st, An overflowing fountain of *grace* is set open to our view. "The Word was made flesh," saith the Apostle John, "and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of *grace* and truth."—"It hath pleased the Father," saith the Apostle Paul, "that in him should all fulness dwell." Nay, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily," Coloss. ii. 9. Here then is not only fulness, but all fulness; nay, the whole fulness of the godhead dwelling in Christ Jesus: and what words can import a *sufficiency* of *grace* if these do not? But may we hope that this *grace* shall be imparted to us? Yes, we may. For, in the

2^d place, The scriptures assure us, that all this *grace* is treasured up in Christ for the behoof of his people. I need not mention particular passages of scripture for the proof of this, seeing it evidently appears from the whole strain of divine revelation, where Christ is uniformly represented as a public person, sustaining the character of

Mediator

Mediator or Surety, living and dying, not for himself, but for the sake of those whom the Father had given him. Hence he is called the *head*, and believers are styled the *members* of his body. He is compared to the *vine*, and in a suitableness to this figurative representation, believers are denominated *branches* which grow out of this vine, and derive all their sap and nourishment from it. That remarkable prophecy of Isaiah, chap. lxi. 1.—3. which our Lord applied to himself in the synagogue at Nazareth, is a clear and strong confirmation of this truth: “The spirit of the Lord
 “ God is upon me, because the Lord hath
 “ anointed me to preach good tidings un-
 “ to the meek; he hath sent me to bind
 “ up the broken-hearted, to proclaim li-
 “ berty to the captives, and the opening
 “ of the prison to them that are bound;
 “ to appoint unto them that mourn in
 “ Zion, to give unto them beauty for
 “ ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the
 “ garment of praise for the spirit of hea-
 “ venliness; that they might be called trees of
 “ righteousness, the planting of the Lord,
 “ that he might be glorified.” Here is a plain declaration, that Christ was anointed,
 and

and filled with the Spirit, for this very end, that he might dispense to his people those supplies of grace which their various cases and necessities might require. We are further assured,

3dly, That Christ, upon all occasions, is willing and ready to impart his grace unto them according to their need. Ignorance of this keeps many Christians in a languishing dejected state. Though they know, that the fulness of the godhead dwelleth in Christ, and that all grace is treasured up in him for the benefit of his people, they are nevertheless haunted with fears and jealousies about his willingness to communicate this treasure to them. These partly arise from the sense of their own unworthiness, and partly from the misrepresentations of Satan, the great adversary, who doth every thing in his power to cherish and strengthen those evil surmises which keep sinners at a distance from the fountain of mercy, and drive them away from that Almighty Saviour, upon whom their help is laid. But, blessed be God! the scriptures furnish us with arguments more than sufficient to refute all the suggestions of Satan
upon

upon this head. The good-will of our Lord shines with such glory in every page of this sacred book, that there can remain no rational ground to doubt of it: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood, and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This" (adds the Evangelist) "spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive," John vii. 37. 38. 39. He is represented in the book of the Revelation, as standing at the door, and knocking, with these gracious words in his mouth: "If any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." How sweet is his name, Jesus, a Saviour! how endearing the relations he stands in to his people, as their shepherd, and friend, their husband, their brother? Was he not tempted, that he might succour those who are tempted? And can we have any reason to question his love to us, who became flesh of our flesh, and bore our griefs, for this very end, that he might be gracious? Nay, we may

may appeal to facts for the proof of this doctrine. All the ransomed around the throne, who overcame by the blood and Spirit of the Lamb, give testimony to this great and important truth: "and I trust there are many thousands upon earth, who, with humble gratitude and joy, can attest the same, and say with the Apostle John, "Of his fulness have all we received, and "grace for grace." More might be said upon this head, but you have heard enough, to shew, that believers in Christ have all possible encouragement to come boldly to a throne of grace, in the assured hope, that they shall obtain mercy, and find grace, to help them in every time of need.—And therefore I shall only add, 4thly, That this grace of Christ, when once obtained, shall infallibly prove victorious, and finally prevail against all opposition. He who is the author, is likewise the finisher of his people's faith; for "his gifts and calling are without repentance."—"He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, till "he bring forth judgement unto victory." Grace, though a small rivulet in appearance, is fed with an everlasting spring. Where

Where the Lord Jesus begins a good work, he will carry it on to perfection, and never leave the objects of his love till he hath made them like himself, all glorious both within and without, and presented them to his Father without spot and blemish.

Thus have I laid before you two important points of Christian doctrine; *first*, our weakness in ourselves;—and, *secondly*, that sufficiency of grace which is to be found in Christ Jesus. The Spirit was not given by measure unto him;—and this precious oil was poured upon his head, that from thence it might flow down to the remotest skirts of his garments, and be communicated to all the members of his body. Nay, he is, upon all occasions, most willing and ready to dispense to his people this inestimable blessing: None who come to him under a sense of need shall be sent empty away.—And the first-fruits of his grace are a certain pledge and earnest of future glory; for “whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world.” It is not so much the Christian that lives, as Christ that liveth in him; and because he lives, all who believe in him shall live also.

“They are kept,” not by “their own strength, but “by the power of God, “through faith unto salvation.”

How completely amiable doth the Lord Jesus appear, when viewed in this light! How safe and happy are they who are vitally united to him! “The young lions “do lack, and suffer hunger; but they “that fear the Lord shall not want any “good thing.”—“O sing unto the Lord “a new song, and his praise in the con- “gregation of his saints: Let Israel re- “joice in him that made and redeemed “him; let the children of Zion be joy- “ful in their King.”—These reflections

are just and natural: but as I must not stay to enlarge upon all the uses that might be made of this subject, I shall at present confine myself to what appears most important and seasonable; namely, a few advices to Christians in general, and more especially to those who have newly entered upon a religious course.—And,

1st, I would forewarn you of the opposition you are likely to meet with in your way heavenward. You have begun a warfare; and “every battle of the warrior is “with confused noise, and garments rolled

“ in

“in blood.” Corruption will, no doubt, assail you from within; but I am to warn you of danger from another quarter. We read, that when Jesus was born, “Herod the King was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.” In like manner, when Christ is formed in any heart, all hell is in an uproar, and the malignant brood of the old serpent upon earth will not fail to spit out their venom against that person as lavishly as they can. The wicked among whom you live, will mock and ridicule you; and it is probable that your former companions in sin will taunt you with past and pardoned faults, (for pardoned they are if you have come to Christ), and will exert their utmost strength and cunning to mar your confidence, if they cannot carry you back into the same excess of riot with themselves: nay, with hellish spite, they may even forge lies to blacken your character, that they may not seem to have suffered any loss by your revolt from their party. All this you have reason to expect; and I speak of it beforehand, that when it happens, you may not be surprised or discouraged, as though some strange and unusual thing had befallen you. It is, and

always hath been, the lot of God's children; and when you suffer in this manner, you have the honour to suffer in the best of causes, and with the best of company. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you;" it hated your Lord before it hated you, and the servant is not greater than his master. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, and because Christ hath called you out of the world, upon these accounts the world hateth you. "Rejoice therefore, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven."

2dly, Maintain a constant sense of your own weakness. Remember that caution of the Apostle, "Be not high-minded, but fear." You can only work to purpose, when you work upon a present strength: the grace you receive to-day, will need a fresh supply of grace to revive and actuate it to-morrow; for Christ always dispenseth his peculiar gifts in such a way, as to remind his people of their constant dependence upon him, and to render them diligent in the use of all the means he hath appointed for promoting the

the divine life in their souls.—At the same time,

3dly, Think honourably of your Lord, in whose service you are engaged. Believe it, whatever Satan may suggest to the contrary, that his heart is kind, and his hand liberal. It is of the highest importance to have just conceptions of Christ, and to know what mercy and strength are laid up for us in him. Look not so much to your enemies, as to the captain of your salvation: set his promises against their threatenings, his omnipotent grace against their impotent malice. Be ye therefore bold, and very courageous; victory is insured to you; it is already sown in that new nature you have got; and ere long the Prince of Peace, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, shall bruise Satan underneath your feet, and put that triumphant song into your mouths, “Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.”

4thly, Remember, that all this sufficient grace is only to be obtained by prayer and supplication:

supplication: "For this," saith God, "will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." Paul, you see, besought the Lord thrice before he received the answer in my text. Prayer keeps the communication open between the head and the members; it is the messenger that goes from earth to heaven, and returns with all necessary blessings from thence. Beware, then, of neglecting this necessary duty. Pray in faith,—pray in the name of Christ,—pray without ceasing,—and beg of Christ to teach you to pray aright, that you may ask and receive, and then your joy shall be full.

"Now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." And to him who is able to keep us from falling, whose *grace* is *sufficient* for all his people, at all times, and in all circumstances, to the only wise God, and our Saviour, be glory, and honour, dominion, and power, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

F I N



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